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SHARPENING THE TRIDENT: THE DECISIONS OF 1889 AND THE CREATION OF MODERN SEAPOWER

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Abstract

It was a year of decisions that heralded the pre-dreadnought era, perhaps the least understood chapter of modern naval history. In March 1889, the Salisbury ministry officially endorsed what later became the Naval Defence Act, which in its final form authorised the largest shipbuilding programme of its kind in the nineteenth century. When it was finally completed five years later, the Royal Navy would have a new fleet based around 10 battleships, 42 cruisers and 18 torpedo-gunboats, all of the latest design and at a cost of £21,500,000. Then, in December 1889, the Harrison administration sought legislative approval to adopt a forward offensive naval strategy, complete with a fleet of battleships and armoured cruisers in an unprecedented shift in American naval policy. This strategic rationale provided the intellectual framework to transform the United States into a modern seapower.

The purpose of this comparative study is to revisit the decisions of 1889, with the benefit of underutilised archival sources and an innovative research methodology recently embraced by the naval historical community. Whereas prior accounts of these decisions generally assess their historical significance in terms of the naval construction that ensued in the pre-dreadnought era, this thesis focuses instead on the pervasive influence of strategic ideas and how strongly they affected the personalities, institutions and events that shaped the respective outcomes in both London and Washington. That strategic ideas shared among naval officers can be decisive in this regard is the underlying tenet behind the cultural approach to historical naval analysis, which is introduced here to highlight the impact of organisational cultures upon the strategic and force structure choices of military organisations.

The length of this thesis is 100,000 words.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

The creation of modern seapower in Britain and the United States can be traced to the decisions of 1889, when both countries initiated a rapid and sustained rate of naval expansion that continued throughout the pre-dreadnought era and into the First World War. The Naval Defence Act, enacted in May 1889, authorised the construction of 10 battleships, 42 assorted cruisers and 18 torpedo-gunboats at the cost of £21,500,000. When finally completed in 1894, the Naval Defence Act resulted in the largest shipbuilding programme of the nineteenth century, the size of which was deemed necessary to modernise the British fleet and deter other countries from following suit. Then, in December 1889, a similar proposal to modernise the American fleet was circulated in Washington, on the heels of a new strategic outlook that envisioned an offensive naval force as the *modus operandi* for hemispheric defence. The result, in both cases, was an unparalleled transformation of naval power on both sides of the Atlantic, due not only to maturing naval technologies and the appearance of the modern battleship, but also the pervasive influence of strategic ideas and their impact upon the policies of peacetime naval administration.

The purpose of this thesis is to revisit the decisions of 1889 in view of these strategic ideas, and from an organisational perspective which combines underutilised archival sources with modern historical techniques to the study of naval policy formulation. Whereas prior accounts of these decisions generally assess their historical significance in terms of the naval construction that ensued in the pre-dreadnought era, this thesis focuses instead upon the shaping influence of strategic ideas and how they were inspired, institutionalised and finally implemented in the policies enacted in 1889. That strategic ideas shared among naval officers can be decisive in this regard is the underlying tenet of the cultural approach to historical naval analysis, which is introduced here to highlight the impact of organisational cultures upon the strategic and force structure choices of military organisations.

The Research Problem:
The Decisions of 1889 in Naval Historiography

Naval historians have written extensively about the pre-dreadnought era, revolving their discussions of British and American naval policies during this period mainly around naval construction, while leaving the decisions of 1889 essentially untouched. Indeed, that the period between 1889 and the appearance of the H.M.S. *Dreadnought* in 1906 is known as the 'pre-dreadnought era' speaks volumes of its historical treatment in the field of modern naval history. Typical of the scholarship written of this period is an overarching emphasis upon the technical aspects of naval shipbuilding, as evidenced by the design histories written by David K. Brown

and Norman Friedman.[1] These histories, while excellent for their detailed descriptions of the shipbuilding process, fall far short in their analysis of the substantive rationale behind key policy choices. 'The problem', observed one prominent naval historian with respect to design histories in general, 'is that we need to address warships and their development as a historical problem, and we need to address it with respect to organisation, to personality, [and] to technology...'.[2]

Yet this line of inquiry remains to be applied to the decisions of 1889. Despite their magnitude and the weighty issues associated with them, much of what has been written about the decisions of 1889 tends to confuse more than it enlightens. This, to a large degree, is also symptomatic of the extent to which naval historians misunderstand how naval policies are formulated, treating the process as a whole as one of the elusive vagaries of peacetime naval administration. The tendency to consign the policy formulation process to the confines of the conceptual 'black box' is further encouraged by existing trends in naval historiography and, more specifically, the limits of the 'policy-and-operations' perspective to naval policy formulation.[3] At its worst, this perspective oversimplifies the internal realities of formulating policy, strategy and doctrine in navies, which become increasingly pronounced in peacetime when organisational decisions are often reflective of the ideas and experiences of naval officers. 'Naval officers', in the words of David Alan Rosenberg, 'acquire their experience and understanding of naval strategy and operations, and later apply it in decisionmaking positions, within the unique organisational structure of the navy'.[4] In absence of this distinction, key policy decisions in peacetime are juxtaposed and treated as if they were made under wartime conditions, when external factors such as foreign naval rivalries and threat perceptions generally assume priority in the decisionmaking process. Thus, in failing to discriminate between these two different settings for policymaking, the potential exists for core naval histories to be misinformed as to the motivating factors behind policy selection and implementation.

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[1] David K. Brown, *Warrior to Dreadnought: Warship Development, 1860-1905*, (London 1997); and Norman Friedman, *U.S. Battleships: An Illustrated Design History*, (Annapolis 1986). Other noteworthy design histories related to this period include Robert Gardiner, (ed), *Steam, Steel and Shellfire: Warships, 1815-1905*, (London 1992); R.A. Burt, *British Battleships, 1889-1904*, (Annapolis 1988); John C. Reilly and Robert L. Scheina, *American Battleships, 1886-1923: Pre-Dreadnought Design and Construction*, (Annapolis 1980); and Roger Chesneau and Eugene Kolesnik, (eds), *Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships, 1860-1905*, (London 1979).

[2] 'Discussion of the Papers Written by Dr. Jon Sumida and Dr. David Rosenberg,' in James Goldrick and John B. Hattendorf, (eds), *Mahan is Not Enough: The Proceedings of a Conference on the Works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond*, (Newport 1993), p. 182.

[3] Jon Tetsuro Sumida and David Alan Rosenberg, 'Machines, Men, Manufacturing, Management and Money: The Study of Navies as Complex Organizations and the Transformation of Twentieth Century Naval History', in John B. Hattendorf, (ed), *Doing Naval History: Essays Toward Improvement*, (Newport 1996), p. 31.

[4] David Alan Rosenberg, 'Process: The Realities of Formulating Naval Strategy', in James Goldrick and John B. Hattendorf, (eds), *Mahan in Not Enough: The Proceedings of a Conference on the Works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond*, (Newport 1993), p. 145.

No where is this more apparent than in traditional accounts of the decisions of 1889, which have never before been the subject of historical reassessment. Conventional wisdom about the Naval Defence Act can be attributed to the research of Arthur Marder, who as a pioneer in the field of modern naval history popularised the 'policy–and-operations' perspective in his landmark studies of British naval policy.[5] Failing to consider the shaping influence of internal factors in peacetime policy deliberations, Professor Marder framed his account of the Naval Defence Act entirely around three conceptual pillars – external provocations, threat perceptions and civilian intervention. On this basis, he concluded that the Naval Defence Act was spurred by a combination of these external factors, with heightened emphasis upon a rumoured Franco-Russian naval combination that Marder believed was ultimately responsible for the new course in Admiralty policy.[6] Less problematic are the Mahan hagiographies, which together form the basis of conventional wisdom about the American naval officer and his alleged individual crusade for strategic adjustment in the United States.[7] Yet these core naval histories have also overlooked other internal factors in favour of an oversimplified image of how American naval policy evolved in the 1880s. That the historian Jon Tetsuro Sumida elected not to debunk this image but chose instead to perpetuate it in his most recent assessment of the celebrated naval theorist and his writings – *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command* (1997) – testifies to the extent to which the strategic discourse that prompted the revolution in American naval affairs remains obscured by the literary exploits of its most famous participant.[8]

Analytic Structure and Methodology:
The Decisions of 1889 from an Organisational Perspective

Whereas the 'policy-and-operations' perspective oversimplifies the process in which naval policies are formulated in peacetime, naval historiography has evolved in the 1990s to include broadened discussions of naval policy formulation from an organisational perspective. This new perspective is based on the presumption that navies are complex organisations, with sophisticated *ideas*, *structures* and *processes* which combine to affect how naval officers think about and prepare for war within the larger context of policy formulation. 'Navies', in the words of Sumida

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[5] Arthur J. Marder, *The Anatomy of British Seapower: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era, 1880-1905*, (New York 1940); and idem., *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 5 Volumes, (London 1961-70).

[6] Marder, *Anatomy*, p. 120.

[7] See, for example, Harold and Margaret Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power, 1776-1918*, (Princeton 1939); idem., *Toward a New Order of Seapower: American Naval Policy and the World Scene, 1918-1922*, (Princeton 1940); Margaret Sprout, 'Mahan: Evangelist of Sea Power', in Edward Mead Earle, (ed), *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler*, (Princeton 1941); and W.D. Puleston, *Mahan: The Life and Work of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan*, (New Haven 1939). A more balanced historical treatment of Mahan can be found in Robert Seager II, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Man and his Letters*, (Annapolis 1977); and Peter Karsten, *The Naval Aristorcracy: The Golden Age of Annapolis and the Emergence of Modern American Navalism*, (New York 1972).

[8] Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command: The Classic Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan Reconsidered*, (Baltimore 1997).

and Rosenberg, 'might instead be better understood as institutions whose manifold dimension, variations in major characteristics, and potential for radical reformation need to be taken into consideration when investigating the...motives underlying the behavior of naval decisionmakers'.[9] To accomplish this task, the naval historical discipline has been urged to embrace new analytical techniques and research methodologies borrowed from the social sciences, especially those that could be used to sort out complex issue areas in naval technology, personnel, economics, administration and finance.[10]

A number of naval historians have already responded with studies that are modelled largely around internal factors and the organisational perspective. Jon Sumida has written extensively on the formulation of British naval policy between 1890 and 1914, with a particular emphasis upon the interaction of internal factors and their impact upon the key policy choices made during the Fisher era.[11] Nicholas Lambert has followed with a similar research agenda in his own studies of the Fisher era, while John Beeler has recently applied an organisational perspective to an investigation of mid-Victorian British naval policy.[12] Finally, and with much fanfare, Andrew Gordon's superb analysis of British naval command highlighted internal factors that detracted from the operational performance of the Grand Fleet at the Battle of Jutland.[13] Because of their analytical roots in the organisational perspective, these studies are marked by a presumptive faith in the pervasive influence of strategic ideas, or naval professional arguments, and their impact in shaping the content and process of naval policy formulation. Yet, as one naval historian has recently warned, it is simply not enough to identify which idea(s) mattered most in the policymaking process: 'In order to explain the history of naval strategy, we must move behind the ideas to consider where they came from and how they were translated from theory into practice'.[14] Understanding key policy choices - in this case the decisions of 1889 - is thus dependent upon a study of strategic ideas and, more importantly, the organisation in which these ideas were inspired, institutionalised and finally implemented in policy frameworks.

Implicit to the pervasive influence of strategic ideas is the concept of organisational culture, which this thesis borrows from the social sciences to link strategic ideas with the environment in

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[9] Sumida and Rosenberg, p. 32.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology and British Naval Policy, 1889-1914*, (London 1989). See also idem., 'Sir John Fisher and the Dreadnought: The Sources of Naval Mythology', *The Journal of Military History*, (October 1995); idem., 'Technology, Culture and the Modern Battleship', *Naval War College Review*, (Autumn 1992); and idem., 'British Naval Administration and Policy in the Age of Fisher', *Journal of Military History*, (January 1990).
[12] Nicholas Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, (Columbia 1999); idem., 'Admiral Sir John Fisher and the Concept of Flotilla Defence, 1904-1909', *Journal of Military History*, (October 1995); and John F. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone and Disraeli Era, 1866-1880*, (Palo Alto 1997).
[13] Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command*, (London 1996).
[14] Rosenberg, p. 145.

which they evolved into preferences within the professional mindset of British and American naval officers. Having originated from organisational theory, the concept of culture has in recent years attracted the attention of political scientists and some historians, who have incorporated it in their analyses to explain certain aspects of military behaviour.[15] Although frequently categorised in this literature as 'service culture', or 'military culture', it is defined for our purposes as a set of attitudes, beliefs and other common habits of thought that are shared among naval officers and serve as the intellectual basis for their conceptions as to the roles and missions of the service. For evidence of culture and its impact upon military and naval decisionmaking, scholars have relied upon departmental records, official and private communications, journal articles, newspaper submissions, personal memoirs, as well as the private papers of senior officers. When combined with an archival-based research methodology, the cultural approach adopted in this thesis is ultimately intended to provide answers to the following questions about the decisions of 1889:

- To what extent were the decisions of 1889 reflective of internal factors, and in particular the strategic ideas and actions of naval officers?

- How were these ideas inspired, institutionalised and finally implemented by naval officers within the context of naval policy formulation?

- What was the overall impact of these ideas and actions – the imprints of organisational culture – upon the content and process of naval policy formulation?

Each of these questions were framed with the expectation that underutilised archival sources, in conjunction with the supporting research of other naval historians, would shed considerable insight into the circumstances which led to the decisions of 1889. The findings of this thesis indicate strongly that conventional wisdom about them is misinformed to varying degrees. In the case of Britain and the Naval Defence Act, the Marder account simply unravels when it is firmly established through intelligence reports that British naval confidence prevailed in the 1880s despite widespread rumours of a Franco-Russian naval combination. Similarly, archival evidence from American departmental records and private papers do not support the image of naval policy formulation upheld in the Mahan hagiographies, although his role was indeed critical among the personalities, institutions and events that spurred a new strategic outlook for the U.S. Navy.

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[15] Among political scientists, see as examples Elizabeth Kier, *Imaging War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars*, (Princeton 1997); idem., 'Culture and Military Doctrine', *International Security*, (Spring 1995); Jeffrey Legro, 'Culture and Preferences in the International Cooperation Two-Step', *American Political Science Review*, (March 1996); and idem., *Cooperation Under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During World War II*, (Ithaca 1995). Among historians, see Gordon, *The Rules of the Game*; Williamson Murray, 'Does Military Culture Matter', *Orbis*, (Winter 1999); David Johnson, *Fast Tanks and Heavy Bombers: Innovation in the U.S. Army, 1917-1945*, (Ithaca 1998); and Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millet, (eds) *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, (Cambridge 1996).

Perhaps even more compelling are three additional observations drawn from the cultural approach as adopted in this thesis. First, in both cases, naval officers worked together to ensure that strategic ideas inspired by the lessons of naval history were studied and represented in selected policy forums, which included professional associations and semi-official think-tanks such as the U.S. Naval Institute, the Royal United Services Institute, and later the Navy Records Society. Also seen in both cases are similarities in how these ideas were institutionalised and implemented in existing policy frameworks. This was accomplished by a new brand of strategic thinking that quickly found favour in war colleges, intelligence departments and among service patrons when bureaucratic opposition threatened their usefulness. Finally, both cases demonstrate the shaping influence of organisational culture, as reflected in ideas and actions of naval officers in the late 1880s, upon the content and process of naval policy formulation.

Organisation of Thesis

At first glance, it might seem that the introduction of organisational culture to naval or even military history is an unusual combination. Although a few military historians have applied the concept sparingly, naval historians have on balance proven reluctant to include a cultural lens in their analytic toolboxes.[16] This situation remains despite the emergence of the organisational perspective to naval policy formulation, which treats navies as complex organisations and, as such, require innovative approaches to study them. The cultural approach adopted in this thesis certainly qualifies as innovative, in the sense that never before has a cultural lens been applied to assess the pervasive influence of strategic ideas and their embodiment in key policy decisions, as was the case with the decisions of 1889. For this reason, it is necessary to elaborate further on the cultural approach, its compatibility with the organisational perspective, and how it will be applied as an analytic instrument in each of the case studies that follow. Chapter 2 will address these methodological concerns, with a survey of the historical and theoretical literature from the fields of naval history and political science. With the three conceptual pillars of the Marder account in full view, a reassessment of the Naval Defence Act will follow in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, with each chapter focused on the transformation of strategic ideas from theory into practice in the policy sphere. Chapters 6 and 7 are arranged with similar objectives in mind for a discussion of the evolving nature of American naval policy in the 1880s, which culminated in the formal adoption of a forward offensive naval strategy in November 1889. Finally, Chapter 8 will consider what has been learned in both cases, not just about the decisions in and of themselves but also their implications to naval policy formulation in London and Washington, as well as the possibilities for the cultural approach in future studies of modern naval history.

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[16] See Footnote 15.

Chapter 2

The Cultural Approach to Historical Naval Analysis

INTRODUCTION

It seems that military historians are prepared, now more than ever, to embrace the linkage between organisational culture and military behaviour. Within the last year, in fact, the American-edited policy journal *Orbis* published selected papers from a conference it sponsored to consider the cultural dimension to the American way of warfare.[1] While the conference was tailored specifically for a discussion of American defence policy issues, an historical assessment of military culture was offered by the prominent military historian Williamson Murray, in which he demonstrated through historical evidence why organisational culture is so important to the military historian when attempting to explain how militaries prepare for the next war. 'Unfortunately, historians have done little on the subject', observed Murray, 'focusing on the most part on more immediate factors such as leadership, doctrine and training to explain victory or defeat. Even works specifically examining military effectiveness and innovation tend to discuss military culture as a tangential issue'.[2] That Murray was one of the first military historians in the 1990s to attribute specific cases of military behaviour to cultural impulses is exemplified in his own edited volume, first published in 1996, that examines the patterns of military innovation observed during the interwar period.[3] 'The history of the first half of this century', he concluded, 'would suggest that military culture was a crucial determinant of how well military organisations adapted to war'.[4] Thus, while it is still too early to tell whether or not other military historians will follow suit and include culture in their own explanatory frameworks, the likelihood that they will has certainly been increased due to the research of Murray and others in this evolving area of scholarship.

Yet the same cannot be said in general about naval historians, although recent trends in naval historiography during the 1990s seem to indicate that the discipline, as a whole, is on the verge of expanding its preferred scope of research to include new lines of inquiry, including the impact of organisational culture upon particular aspects of naval policy. The primary aim of this chapter is to establish the cultural approach to historical naval analysis and, more importantly, how it is used in this thesis as an analytic lens to explain the strategic and force structure choices reached in Britain and the United States in 1889. There are three main sections. The first section considers recent transactions in naval historiography, including the emergence in the 1990s of the organisational perspective to naval policy formulation. Also highlighted is the extent to which

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[1] See Harvey Sicherman, 'The Future of American Military Culture', *Orbis* (Winter 1999), pp. 9-10; Don M. Snider, 'An Uninformed Debate on Military Culture', *Orbis*, (Winter 1999), pp. 11-26; Williamson Murray, 'Does Military Culture Matter?', *Orbis*, (Winter 1999), pp. 27-42; and John Hillen, 'Must U.S. Military Culture Reform?', *Orbis*, (Winter 1999), pp. 43-57.

[2] Murray, p. 27.

[3] Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millet, (eds), *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, (Cambridge 1996).

[4] Murray, 'Military Culture', p. 35.

cultural analyses were encouraged within the discipline by both naval historians and political scientists, a recent example of organisational culture in historical naval analysis, and some insights into the possible reasons why the cultural approach has been applied so infrequently by naval historians. The second section uses literature from political science to compare and contrast three analytic approaches available to explain the sources of military behaviour in peacetime, to emphasise the explanatory value of the cultural approach when compared with the traditional modes of analysis in strategic studies. Each approach focuses on different aspects of military organisation, ranging from the *structure* of the organisation itself and its *constituents* to the *ideas and preferences* shared within the professional officer corps. This last aspect is largely analogous to Murray's definition of military culture, as 'the ethos and professional attributes, both in terms of experience and intellectual study, that contribute to a common core understanding of the nature of war within military organisations'.[5] On the basis of this comparison, the chapter concludes with an overview of how the cultural approach is to be incorporated in this thesis to explain the decisions of 1889.

ORGANISATIONAL ANALYSIS IN NAVAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

As a whole, the study of naval history has experienced its peaks and troughs throughout the twentieth century, culminating in the 1990s with a renewed challenge to revive the discipline when confronted again with the prospect of academic obscurity. What was particularly noteworthy about the decade were the instances of scholarly introspection, when naval historians convened a series of discussions about the future of the discipline, opportunities to improve the research and writing of naval history, as well as the promise of adopting new concepts and methodologies from related disciplines in the social sciences.[6] In the process, naval historians succeeded in identifying narrow trends in the historical literature which, in the past, have generally informed naval historiography and should be discontinued. Included among these trends was a research agenda that focused mainly on the policies and operations of navies in wartime or in preparation for inevitable conflict, where the motives and intentions behind key policy decisions were assessed merely as parochial responses to actual or perceived threats. The unfortunate result of this policy-and-operations perspective was an overused historiographical method of writing modern naval history, which oversimplified the process in which naval policies were formulated among politicians and naval professionals in peacetime. What was advocated in its place resembled a Kuhnian paradigm shift in the research and writing of naval historians, to

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[5] Ibid., p. 27.

[6] These discussions are codified in John Hattendorf, (ed), *Doing Naval History: Essays Toward Improvement*, (Newport 1995); idem, (ed), *Ubi Sumus?: The State of Naval and Maritime History*, (Newport 1994); and John Hattendorf and James Goldrick, (eds), *Mahan is Not Enough: The Proceedings of a Conference on the Works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond*, (Newport 1993).

include for the first time a multidisciplinary orientation and new lines of inquiry that consider the internal as well as the external sources of naval policy.

It further became apparent in the 1990s that naval historians could no longer ignore the explanatory value of understanding the relationship between organisational culture and the policy formulation process in navies. 'Navies are complex institutions', observed Jon Tetsuro Sumida, 'whose history as such can only be understood through scholarship that takes into account the full range of technical, tactical, strategic, administrative, economic, financial, political, sociological and *cultural* characteristics that define their nature and function'.[7] This section will review the introduction of organisational culture to the study of naval history, its relevance to the perceived weaknesses of the discipline, and the limited application of cultural arguments in a recent contribution to naval history.

Navies as Complex Organisations:
The Organisational Perspective to Naval Policy Formulation

The introduction of organisational culture to the study of naval history is linked largely to the recognition that navies are complex organisations and should be treated as such within the boundaries of naval historiography. The first scholar to champion the point of organisational complexity in the patterns of historical naval analysis was Professor Sumida, whose individual contributions to the discipline includes a well-received revisionist assessment of the '*Dreadnought* Revolution' and the formulation of British naval policy during the Fisher era.[8] In his 1989 work, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy*, Sumida combined an innovative research methodology with underutilised archival sources to fashion a well-documented version of British naval policy that highlighted the financial, technical and organisational inputs to key policy decisions made between 1904 and 1914.[9] Even more impressive is the extent to which Sumida succeeded in unravelling the decisionmaking process in the Admiralty to show how each of these internal inputs factored into the strategic and force structure choices that heralded the construction of the *Dreadnought*-class battleships and, in particular, the hybrid battlecruisers favoured by Admiral Fisher. It was thus no surprise when these choices are attributed by Sumida to a 'multi-

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[7] Jon Tetsuro Sumida, 'Technology, Culture and the Modern Battleship', *Naval War College Review*, (Autumn 1992), p. 87. Emphasis not included in original text.
[8] Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology, and British Naval Policy, 1889-1914*, (London 1989).
[9] The research of the late Professor Marder was largely responsible for informing conventional wisdom before the publication of the Sumida volume. See Arthur Marder, *Fear God and Dreadnought: The Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*, 3 Volumes (London 1952-59); and idem., *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 5 Volumes, (London 1961-70).

tiered process [of decisionmaking] that was heavily influenced by budgetary pressure, technical uncertainty, flaws in bureaucratic organization, and the vagaries of chance'.[10]

That Sumida did not consider organisational culture as a factor is not surprising, for the concept remained on the periphery of strategic studies until the mid-1990s. Still, however, his volume is important to the current thesis in three critical respects. First, Sumida's research agenda was predicated on the assumption that the Royal Navy in the early twentieth century was supported by a sophisticated and highly complex institutional structure and, for this reason, necessitates a comprehensive archival-based approach to sorting through the volumes of Admiralty records. 'The history of this subject', Sumida observed in describing his mode of analysis, 'must instead be painstakingly reconstructed piece by piece from a wider range of materials than have been previously customary.... Such an approach requires the historian to examine very large quantities of evidence, investigate much that is recondite, and present major findings about significantly related but nonetheless diverse topics'.[11] Equally instructive was his departure from the policy-and-operations perspective popularised by the historical narratives of the late Arthur Marder and Stephen Roskill. While the contributions of these two prominent naval historians should not be undervalued, their focus on wartime naval policy and operations can now be shown as incomplete in light of the standard established by Sumida. Thus, by adopting an 'organisational perspective' that presumes that navies are complex organisations, Sumida concluded with findings that contradicted 'previous treatments of British naval policy, which have for the most part focused on the actions of a few senior officers and politicians, paid scant attention to finance, greatly oversimplified the technical issues, ignored administrative context, and largely factored out the role of happenstance'.[12]

Finally, and most importantly, the explanatory value of the organisational perspective, complete with its archival-based approach and methodological rigour, has prompted other naval historians to adopt it to some extent. Two recent studies warrant particular attention here, for the underlying objective behind both volumes seeks to reduce British naval policy to its core political, economic, technical and administrative components, all of which were discovered to have shaped naval policy formulation in the Admiralty. This was indeed the case during the Fisher era, as originally suggested by Professor Sumida above and largely substantiated by the research of Nicholas Lambert. In his book, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution* (1999), Lambert faulted the generally accepted core naval histories of the period, especially those written by Marder, for sustaining an incomplete and oversimplified perspective of the archival evidence available at the

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[10] Sumida, p. xviii.
[11] Ibid., pp. xvii-xviii.
[12] Ibid., p. xviii.

time.[13] The differences between the Marder and Lambert accounts, it is inferred, become immediately apparent when evaluating them each on the scope of their of archival research, which in theory would determine whether or not the archival evidence collected was overlooked by a narrowly conceived research agenda. On the basis of such an evaluation, Lambert argued that the Marder account is short-sighted and often inaccurate. 'As a result of largely oversimplified analysis', continued Lambert in an obvious reference to Marder, 'important issues during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as the impact of the rapid advances of naval technology upon the formulation of naval strategy and the influence of financial, economie [sic] and industrial considerations, too often have been dismissed as being of marginal importance'.[14]

For the moment, however, this study is less interested in the conclusions reached by Lambert than the historiographical method used to derive them. Nonetheless, it is important to observe that Lambert also attributed key policy decisions during the Fisher era to a host of internal factors that were inadvertently missed by historians who described them as responses to external provocations from foreign naval developments. This, in essence, exemplifies the fatal defect in the policy-and-operations perspective, which in general can be attributed to suspect research methodologies and narrative integrity. 'Naval planning and operational performance', concedes Lambert, 'are generally regarded by historians to form the heart of naval history - judging by the emphasis placed on these subjects in more core naval studies'.[15] But in this case, the core naval studies were off the mark, as Marder and others 'failed to take cognizance of a myriad of "internal" influences upon the formulation of "naval policy", such as the prevailing climate of financial limitation, institutional or personal ambitions, or the impact of interservice rivalry'.[16]

Ironically, the conclusions reached by Lambert are strikingly similar to those offered by John Beeler, even though the latter concerns himself with the formulation of British naval policy in the nineteenth century. Whether he intended to or not, Beeler incorporated in his analytical framework an organisational perspective to reassess naval policy formulation during the Gladstone and Disraeli ministries, all the while explicitly departing from the traditional emphasis upon technological developments at the expense of other internal factors that were later found to shape key policy decisions in the Admiralty. 'Technology was (and is) an important element in naval warfare, policy, and strategy, but technology should be viewed in its contemporary setting', cautioned Beeler at the outset of his analysis.[17] 'It cannot be fully understood without reference to

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[13] Nicholas A. Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, (Columbia 1999).
[14] Nicholas A. Lambert, 'Admiral Sir John Fisher and the Concept of Flotilla Defence, 1904-1909', *The Journal of Military History*, (October 1995), p. 646.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Lambert, 'Sir John Fisher', p. 7.
[17] John F. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone and Disraeli Era, 1866-1880*, (Palo Alto 1997), p. 5.

the political, economic, administrative, international, and even ideological context within which it evolves'.[18] Writing about a complex organisation in a complex era, Beeler discounted the notion that British naval policy was largely reactive to a technological arms race and perceived threats from France, as his archival-based conclusions revealed that Admiralty officials were quite aware of the growing disparity in naval strength in favour of Britain from the late 1860s.

Nor does his research show that the different political agendas espoused by Gladstone and Disraeli resulted in anything more than incremental shifts in the conduct of British naval policy, when in fact Admiralty officials trod carefully throughout this period of technological uncertainty despite the fiscal concerns of the prime minister. Beeler focused instead on other factors, which included 'the domestic political scene, government fiscal policy, the administration (and administrators) of the navy, and certainly not least of all, British perceptions of foreign governments and navies'.[19] In the process, Beeler reduced the scope of his analysis even further to consider the role of specific individuals and their ideas on the shaping of British naval policy, which as will be seen below is analogous to the cultural approach as adopted by political scientists in explaining the behaviour of complex military organisations. Thus, while Beeler did not formally consider organisational culture in his analytical framework, the prerequisites were certainly there to add an explicit culture lens to this chapter of naval history, especially since the volume is described on the dustjacket 'as much a case study in human responses to the process of modernization as it is an investigation of mid-Victorian British naval policy'.[20]

The Introduction of Organisational Culture to Naval History

The organisational perspective was first showcased at a time when naval history, as a discipline, was struggling for its academic survival. Although few studies adopting this perspective have followed the publication of Sumida's *In Defence of Naval Supremacy* in 1989, naval historians seemed eager to embrace a new treatment of naval organisations in modern historical analysis, for it offered the real prospect of a thorough understanding of the complex nature of naval administration and its related functions. Accordingly, in the 1990s, naval historians invited discussion of the merits of the new perspective, its potential application in historical scholarship and, more to the point, its relevance to new approaches to the research and writing of naval history. Without doubt, the most important discussion of these issues occurred at a conference convened at Yale University in June 1994, the proceedings of which were subsequently codified in a volume appropriately entitled *Doing Naval History: Essays Toward Improvement*.[21] The conference was significant for many reasons, as implied by the title of the

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[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., p. 4.
[20] Ibid.
[21] See Footnote 6.

volume, for it was here for the first time that naval historians seriously considered linkages between organisational culture, naval policy formulation, and the sources of naval conduct. What emerged from the discussions that ensued were persuasive arguments, from two naval historians and a political scientist, for adding a cultural lens to the toolbox of the modern naval historian, especially when treating navies as complex organisations in historical naval analysis. 'In this, all will agree', concluded John Hattendorf, 'that navies are instruments of government and operate as highly technological organisations within the context of both domestic and foreign politics, finance, technology, and bureaucracy. This range is as much the realm of political scientists as it is of naval historians'.[22]

As will be discussed further below, political scientists have generally been more amenable to the concepts borrowed from the other social sciences, especially those that are perceived to add explanatory value to theories that explain and predict variations of military behaviour. Naval historians, out of force of habit, have traditionally been so less inclined, at least until the precarious state of naval history compelled them to be less exclusive and to look elsewhere for new research methodologies and analytical approaches to improve the writing of their subject. 'If we are to achieve any improvement in our understanding of navies in the machine age', warned Captain James Goldrick, R.A.N., 'there must be a new approach to the subject, one which integrates the elements of technology, finance, strategy, operations and personnel...'.[23]The study of navies as complex organisations would accomplish the enormous task of integrating these elements, a point that was underscored by Professors Sumida and Rosenberg in a paper delivered at the Yale conference. The underlying objective of their paper was to outline a persuasive rationale for a multidisciplinary orientation to encourage the renovation of the standard core naval histories in light of the limitations of the policy-and-operations perspective and the underutilised volume of archival materials available: 'Speaking very generally, the core histories oversimplify, and thereby obscure, the influence of technical, personnel, economic, administrative, and financial matters to extreme degrees'.[24]

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[22] Hattendorf, 'Doing Naval History', p. 2.

[23] James Goldrick, 'The Problems of Modern Naval History', in John B. Hattendorf, (ed), *Doing Naval History: Essays Toward Improvement*, (Newport 1995), p. 22. A distinguished naval officer as well as an accomplished historian, Goldrick combines historical analysis with personal experiences with modern naval administration, a useful combination that lends additional credence to his observations.

[24] Jon Tetsuro Sumida and David Alan Rosenberg, 'Machines, Men, Manufacturing, Management, and Money: The Study of Navies as Complex Organizations and the Transformation of Twentieth Century Naval History', in John B. Hattendorf, (ed), *Doing Naval History: Essays Toward Improvement*, (Newport 1995), p. 31. For similar points, see Jon Tetsuro Sumida, 'Sir John Fisher and the *Dreadnought*: The Sources of Naval Mythology', *The Journal of Military History*, (October 1995); and David Alan Rosenberg, 'Process: The Realities of Formulating Modern Naval Strategy', in James Goldrick and John B. Hattendorf, (eds), *Mahan is Not Enough: The Proceedings of a Conference on the Works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond*, (Newport 1993).

To assist naval historians in their tasks to renovate these core naval histories, Sumida and Rosenberg recommended that scholars should be enlisted from the social sciences and other related disciplines, ranging from political science, economics and military sociology, to a host of historical subspecialties (ie., diplomatic, political and scientific), international security, and strategic studies. In their estimate, scholars trained in these fields would be in a better position to contribute 'new model monographs' which would renovate the standard historical narratives through the application of research methodologies and novel analytical techniques used in their respective disciplines. Of particular interest to Sumida and Rosenberg are those methodologies, concepts and techniques specifically tailored for subjects that were previously relegated by naval historians to conceptual 'black boxes', such as the impact of complex institutional settings upon the decisionmaking process. When taken together, these modes of analysis are deemed critical for their potential to reveal and document the internal sources of naval policy, including the extent to which organisational cultures impact the strategic and force structure choices rendered in upper level policy debates. On the prospect of cultural analyses of this sort, Sumida and Rosenberg were confident:

> The navy history literature had for all intents and purposes not taken account of this factor, and the general proposition that it was an issue of considerable significance is a worthy one. Unfortunately, the exaggeration of claims, the dependence upon anecdote rather than the deployment of systematic argument, and inadequate or faulty evidence has compromised much of the value of this work, and thus restricted its influence. On the other hand, the proliferation of well-founded and conceptually advanced writing on navies as institutions will provide the basis for more sensible analyses of the social and cultural context of naval officer behaviour, and that of politicians and bureaucrats as well. This should establish socio-cultural analysis as a much larger and more important form of naval history than is currently the case.[25]

The inclusion of organisational culture as a focal point of study in naval history was also encouraged by Robert Jervis, one of the political scientists who attended the Yale conference who urged naval historians to embrace the organisational perspective and the multidisciplinary approach advocated by Sumida and Rosenberg. 'There is something of a paradox here', observed Jervis, 'in that we need to be able to isolate the field of naval history on (sic) order to study it and yet part of what makes the field so interesting is the links it has to many other areas - e.g., foreign policy, organizational theory, [and] the uses of technology'.[26] Accordingly, the focus of naval historians should now be redirected to explore naval-related subject areas that were once considered on the periphery of the discipline. Jervis highlighted several of these subject areas, including the naval inputs to national power and patterns of international politics, the internal and external sources of naval conduct, and the propensity for innovation in naval organisations. Each of these lines of inquiry, however, requires a research methodology that is tailored specifically to

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[25] Ibid., p. 34.
[26] Robert Jervis, 'Navies, Politics, and Political Science', in John B. Hattendorf, (ed), *Doing New History: Essays Toward Improvement*, (Newport 1995), p. 41.

answer the questions relevant to the researcher: 'A student of the role of navies in international conflict, for example, will use different concepts, examine different data, and employ different methodologies than the person who wants to know how navies influenced and were influenced by conceptions of gender'.[27] Similarly, a cultural explanation of certain strategic and force structure choices would require a much different conception of the organisation and its constituents, the impact of organisational culture as an intervening variable in the process of policy formulation, and critical linkages between the personalities, institutions and events relevant to the outcomes under scrutiny. In the following diagram, Jervis visualised his conception of how organisational culture intervenes between the flow of inputs and outputs in the formulation of naval policy:

Table 1.1

External Environment		**Procurement**	
Domestic Politics	**Organisational Culture**	**Strategy**	**Capability**
Bureaucratic Politics	**Technology Available**	**Tactics**	
Decision-Making		**Propensity to Innovate**	

Source: Jervis, p. 47.

The overview above is intended to flow from left to right - from inputs to outputs, with culture and technology the intervening variables - but Jervis specifically refrained from complicating the diagram with arrows that suggest causality, especially when there are multiple connections between the categories. Nevertheless, the primary aim of the overview is to illustrate that organisational culture is an important factor for naval historians to consider when attempting to explain the host of circumstances that shaped key policy decisions, which often are obscured in complex organisations such as navies. In some cases, the researcher may discover that the sources of naval conduct emanated from external considerations, as commonly seen in strategic and force structure choices rendered in response to foreign provocations or threat perceptions in anticipation of conflict. However, explanations of key policy decisions can be increasingly complicated in the absence of wartime conditions and, for this reason, naval historians are now compelled to pierce the veneer of modern naval organisations and to prioritise which decisional inputs were most influential in the decisionmaking process. For these reasons, the future research agendas of naval historians should be expanded to include adequate consideration of both the external and internal dimensions of naval policy formulation. What is found through archival-based research might reveal the existence of service cultures as the most significant factors that

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[27] Ibid.

shaped the ideational context from which strategic ideas and other preferences were inspired, institutionalised and implemented.

Organisational Culture and the 'Rules of the Game'

Yet, for the most part, it appears that naval historians are reluctant to consider the organisational cultures of navies when framing the answers to their research questions, despite the enthusiasm recorded at the Yale conference for the organisational perspective and the arguments presented above by Sumida, Rosenberg and Jervis. The only exception in the naval historical literature is the recently published research of Andrew Gordon. In his well-received book, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command* (1996), Gordon attributed the incompatible approaches to command and control exercised at Jutland to a signals-dominated service culture that emphasised a centralised system in steam-tactics since the publication of Captain P.H. Colomb's *Manual of Fleet Evolutions* in 1874.[28] When a decentralised philosophy of command came into practice under Vice-Admiral Sir George Tryon in the 1890s, known simply as 'action principles' or TA, Gordon suggests that a transition in philosophies would have ensued had Tryon not met an untimely death in the *Victoria-Camperdown* collision in 1893. Instead, a 'counter-reformation' occurred which further factionalised the senior officers corps into two schools of thought, those in favour of a flexible and decentralised style of command, as opposed to those officers who advocated the resumption of the more rigid and centralised system of command and control. Historically more comfortable with the latter, centralisation again prevailed in the Royal Navy, as practised by Admiral Sir John Jellicoe in manoeuvres with the Grand Fleet and later reflected in the inflexibilties of his Grand Fleet Battle Orders. 'By the time of Jutland', observed David Syrett in support of the Gordon thesis, 'the Royal Navy had thus developed into an institution in which all authority was centralized in the commander, with subordinate officers almost reduced to automatons whose only task was to respond to the commands of their superiors'.[29]

It is thus within this cultural context that Gordon revisited the tactical movements of the British Grand Fleet at Jutland, with particular emphasis on the failed coordination between Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty and Rear-Admiral Hugh Evan-Thomas that ultimately culminated in the loss of two British battlecruisers and serious damage to two battleships. Trained as a signals-officer and a disciple of the traditional centralised school, Evan-Thomas is shown here to have waited until he was formally signalled to reverse the course of the Fifth Battle Squadron and close with the Battlecruiser Fleet commanded by Beatty. Gordon equally faulted Beatty for assuming that his subordinate would anticipate the movement to turn south and close with his vulnerable

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[28] Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command*, (London 1996).

battlecruisers, which may have occurred had Evan-Thomas been familiar with Beatty's preferences for delegation and initiative. In the final analysis, Gordon highlighted British experiences at Jutland to further the point that organisational culture, or military culture as he refers to it, can have a serious impact on operational performance, especially when conflicting tactical doctrines of command and control are advocated within the senior officer corps. 'Military cultures impart doctrine by corporate ambience as much as by explicit teaching', concluded the author, adding that 'the "ambience" of a military culture consists out of its ethos, its conceits and its traditions'.[30] Although Gordon confined his historical analysis to the linkage between organisational culture and the development of British tactical doctrine in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the volume nonetheless demonstrates the value of the cultural lens in explaining other aspects of naval history, including the strategic and force structure choices examined in this thesis.

But Gordon would be the first to admit that the cultural context of his analysis was informed not from any innovative trend in naval historiography, but rather from his intimate knowledge of service culture as an officer in the Royal Naval Reserve.[31] So why has the organisational perspective and the related concept of culture been applied so infrequently by naval historians? There are three possible reasons. The first reason is a function of time and resources in a specialised discipline, as the application of the organisational perspective requires extensive archival research over a broad range of materials, which include the financial, political, economic and administrative aspects of naval policy. Many of these studies, in fact, begin as doctoral research and are continued beyond the dissertation.[32] The second can be attributed to the mixed message over the level of research skills and training required to sustain an organisational analysis. While Jervis, for example, seemed to encourage naval historians to apply for themselves the concepts and methodologies borrowed from political science and elsewhere, Sumida and Rosenberg implied that their colleagues should leave these lines of inquiry to qualified researchers from other disciplines. 'How quickly changes will come is impossible to predict', explained Sumida and Rosenberg, 'but the prospects for advance are not fair. There are few historians of naval affairs of any kind to start with, and fewer still who are likely to pursue the course of scholarship just presented'.[33] Finally, it is quite possible that naval historians remain unconvinced whether or not culture should be included among the traditional inputs of policy formulation in

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[29] David Syrett, 'Roundtable: Notes on Andrew Gordon: "The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command"', *International Journal of Maritime History*, (December 1997), p. 183.
[30] Gordon, p. 580.
[31] Conversation with Dr. Andrew Gordon on 24 September 1999. See also Andrew Gordon, 'The Rules of the Game Revisited', *International Journal of Maritime History*, (December 1997), p. 189.
[32] The contributions of Sumida, Lambert and Beeler described above, for example, all originated from postgraduate research.
[33] Sumida and Rosenberg, p. 39.

military organisations. For this we turn our attention to three schools of thought on the topic in political science and strategic studies, to outline how cultural arguments have evolved in assessing the sources of military behaviour in peacetime.

EXPLAINING MILITARY BEHAVIOUR IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Contributions to naval history from political scientists can sometimes be problematic, especially when theoretical insights are offered as explanations to the rise and fall of naval powers. In this case, however, naval historians will find the contributions of political scientists to be quite instructive, as the latter group of scholars have frequently borrowed concepts from organisational theory to postulate their own theories of particular aspects of military behaviour. These range from the sources of military doctrine and conflict escalation to organisational inputs to military innovation, weapons acquisition and grand strategy. The theories postulated thus far are far from homogenous, as divergent schools of thought among political scientists have emerged in the 1990s to debate the merits of each approach and the host of external and internal factors perceived to evoke variations in military behaviour within and across national boundaries.[34]

When used to inform the naval historical community, the theoretical qualities of each approach is less important than the factors used to underwrite them, which will be referred to here respectively as the bureaucratic, professional and cultural approaches to organisational analysis in strategic studies. Each of these approaches can be distinguished according to: (1) its conception of the military organisation; (2) the role of civilians and military professionals in the policy formulation process; and (3) the inputs perceived to shape organisational action (ie., strategic choices), the most prevalent of which include external provocations, threat perceptions, civil-military relations, domestic political structures and organisational culture. As will be seen further below, the addition of culture to this list of variables coincided in the 1990s with an evolving perspective of military organisations among political scientists, one which conforms largely with the treatment of navies as complex organisations and the potential for cultural arguments in historical naval analysis.

The Bureaucratic Approach: Structures Matter in Explaining Military Behaviour

Naval historians, particularly the advocates of the policy-and-operations perspective, would find the bureaucratic approach the most familiar among the three approaches to organisational analysis presented here. Simply put, it attributes the selection of military strategies and force structures to external circumstances, as manifested in actual or perceived threats to national security from foreign military developments or other systemic changes in the *status quo* among

nations. The agents for choice in these circumstances are civilian policymakers, who are frequently compelled to intervene in military preparations when organisational actions are deemed parochial and insufficient, which is often perceived to be the case when military professionals are left to their own devices to decide how to prepare and organise for conflict. Meanwhile, incentives to innovate within military organisations are virtually non-existent, as institutionalised forms of warfare are routinely applied in carefully orchestrated roles and combat missions. Military behaviour, in short, is thus seen as a function of three essential inputs - external provocations, threat perceptions and civilian intervention - that together contribute to the most widely accepted interpretation, in both political science and strategic studies, of how states generate military power and organise themselves for war.

Political scientists will immediately recognise the underlying tenets of neorealism, also known as structural realism, that are rooted in this account of how states prepare for war in heightened periods of uncertainty.[35] It is based largely upon the research of Barry Posen and his efforts to explain strategic and doctrinal choices as systemic imperatives while adopting a bureaucratic characterisation of military organisations. In his book, *The Sources of Military Doctrine* (1984), Posen asserted the explanatory value of the neorealist account after comparing it with a traditional form of organisational theory, at the core of which is a narrow conception of organisations that emphasises institutional structure over the behaviour of its constituents in shaping organisational outcomes.[36] With structure deemed ever so important, it is further alleged that similarly-structured organisations will assume predictive qualities, such as the usage of preestablished routines and standard scenarios to reduce levels of uncertainty and with it the incentives for innovation. In essence, Posen adopted the bureaucratic conception of organisations popularised in the 1970s by Graham Allison in *The Essence of Decision* (1971), which portrayed military organisations as risk-averse, excessively rigid, and predisposed to organisational inertia. 'Where the international environment cannot be negotiated', observes Allison, 'organizations deal with remaining uncertainty by establishing a set of *standard scenarios* that constitute the contingencies

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[34] This debate is summarised in Michael C. Desch, 'Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies, *International Security*, (Summer 1998), pp. 141-170.

[35] Neorealism is a research paradigm within political science that attempts to explain various forms of state behaviour through references to the international system and, more precisely, the competition that inherently develops between states confronted with different levels of military capability. As such, a neorealist lens of military behaviour generally does not consider factors at the organisational or state levels of analysis. As observed by Goldman and Andres: 'For neorealism, the competitive logic governing the international system creates a powerful incentive for states to adopt new military methods and to emulate the military practices of the most successful states in the system'. Emily O. Goldman and Richard B. Andres, 'Systemic Effects of Military Innovation and Diffusion', *Security Studies*, (Summer 1999), p. 82.

[36] Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between The World Wars*, (Ithaca 1984). Posen adopts this conception from organisational theorists who advocate the natural systems model of organisational behaviour. For more on this point, see Theo Farrell, 'Figuring Out Fighting Organisations: The New Organisational Analysis in Strategic Studies', *The Journal of Strategic*

for which they prepare'.[37] For these reasons, Posen viewed civilian intervention into strategic and doctrinal matters as essential, since concerns for organisational autonomy will exacerbate civil-military relations to the point where self-absorbed military organisations are 'unwilling to provide civilian authorities with information that relates to doctrinal questions, especially those having most to do with the actual conduct of operations'.[38]

What actually causes civilians to intervene in military affairs is a question which Posen answered with predictions from structural realism and, in particular, his observation that 'soldiers are not better equipped than civilians to interpret the international political system and come to reasonable doctrinal conclusions'.[39] To emphasise his point, Posen compared the origins of strategic and doctrinal choices in Britain, France and Germany during the interwar period. He attributed British defensive preparations for war in the 1930s, for example, to civilian recognition of the necessity to equip the Royal Air Force with sufficient fighter strength to oppose the German Luftwaffe in anticipation of the Battle of Britain. When the RAF resisted entreaties to bolster Fighter Command at the perceived expense of Bomber Command, civilian intervention was required to compel the RAF to accept a defensive orientation, despite the individual efforts of Air Marshall Sir Hugh Dowding. 'The heating up of the international system', observed Posen, 'encouraged civilians to intervene in the operational preparations of the RAF and, against its will, press it in the direction of greater air defense efforts'.[40]

Similarly, French authorities also sought to redress deficiencies in their own preparations for war, but in the main were preoccupied with finding coalition partners (ie., Britain) to 'balance' the perceived threats from Germany - strategic behaviour that is anticipated by the neorealist school of thought. As a result, French interwar doctrine continued to evolve with civilian political support toward a strict defensive orientation, even though the exigencies of the situation required innovative military thinking beyond that offered by General Maurice Gamelin, Chief of Staff for National Defence from 1938-1940: 'The changes suggested by French military authorities such as De Gaulle had an excessively offensive appearance that would have undercut the broader purposes of French grand strategy'.[41] Finally, Posen concluded that the German Wehrmacht - as an organisation - was of less importance than the anticipated wartime contingencies that spurred development of innovative doctrinal concepts and armour formations envisioned to invade France in a multifront war. Civilian intervention was thus required to compel the Wehrmacht to embrace

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Studies, (March 1996), pp. 124-125; and W. Richard Scott, *Organizations: Rational, Natural and Open Systems*, Third Edition, (Englewood 1992), pp. 51-75.

[37] Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision*, (Boston 1971), p. 84. Emphasis in the original.

[38] Posen, p. 53.

[39] Ibid., p. 188.

[40] Ibid., p. 178.

[41] Ibid., p. 139

the Blitzkrieg concept, especially as General Heinz Guderian and other proponents of high-speed, deep armoured thrusts were opposed within the German Army. 'That even the offensively inclined German Army', observes Posen, 'required a good kick from the outside to create such an offensive innovation provides still more support for the utility of organization theory in explaining certain tendencies within modern military organizations'.[42]

While the conclusions reached by Posen are not universally accepted by historians and political scientists, as evident in the evolution of scholarship outlined below, the neorealist account and its bureaucratic conception of military organisations remains the traditional approach to explaining the sources of military conduct in peacetime. Still, however, other political scientists have recently attempted to soften the bureaucratic approach with variations that combine external pressures with a less pessimistic evaluation of military organisations. Emily Goldman, for example, has postulated that strategic adjustments, defined as alterations in service roles and missions, can originate within military organisations provided that such innovations are triggered by the notions of urgency, desirability and possibility.[43] That is, the external pressures arising from threats abroad and domestic political incentives provide, respectively, the urgency and desirability to encourage new roles and missions that hinge on the nature of possibility. 'Organisations can adjust', Goldman concluded, 'provided the appropriate stimulants are present'.[44] An alternative perspective, offered by Kimberly Zisk, provides a theoretical bridge between the bureaucratic and professional approaches to organisational analysis in strategic studies. On the one hand, Zisk sides with Posen in her conception of military organisations, observing that '[they] will resist innovative ideas that threaten their budgetary resource share or corporate autonomy'.[45] In similar fashion, Zisk also describes military innovation as *reactions* to external pressures, originating from shifts in enemy doctrine or from domestic threats posed by political elites. Where Posen and Zisk disagree, however, is over the perceived weight of strategic ideas and the individual contributions of constituents from within the organisation, which Zisk believes can rival institutional self-interest in shaping organisational outcomes. In sum, the theories advocated by Goldman and Zisk, while they depart from the bureaucratic approach in some critical respects, unite in their mutual agreement that militaries are essentially reactive institutions which require some combination of external provocation, threat perceptions

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[42] Ibid., p. 226.
[43] Emily O. Goldman, 'Mission Possible: Organizational Learning in Peacetime', in Peter Trubowitz, Emily O. Goldman and Edward Rhodes, (eds), *The Politics of Strategic Adjustment: Ideas, Institutions, and Interests*, (New York 1999). See also Emily O. Goldman, 'The US Military in Uncertain Times: Organizations, Ambiguity, and Strategic Adjustment', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, (June 1997), pp. 41-74.
[44] Goldman, 'Mission Possible', p. 251.
[45] Kimberly Martin Zisk, *Engaging the Enemy: Organization Theory and Soviet Military Innovation*, (Princeton 1993), p. 14.

and civilian intervention to ensure that military preparations adequately reflect national security concerns.

The Professional Approach:
Individuals Matter in Explaining Military Behaviour

The professional approach, on the other hand, seeks to explain military behaviour through the interaction of external and internal inputs that occur *within* military organisations, and *among* individual decisionmakers, to shape strategic choices and other aspects of military policy. It conforms largely to a second school of organisation theory, which focuses less on structure than the internal operations of complex organisations, including how decisionmakers perceive their external environment and render strategic decisions when confronted with circumstances that require changes in organisational action. Typical of this research paradigm is the view that a 'complex organization is more like a modern weapons system than like old-fashioned fixed fortifications, more like a mobile than a static sculpture, more like a computer than an adding machine. In short, the organization is a dynamic system'.[46]

The intellectual origins of the professional approach can be traced to Samuel Huntington, who characterises military organisations not in terms of perceived structural impediments to optimal strategies and force structures, but rather by the professional competence of military officers that reside in them. In his book, *The Soldier and the State* (1957), Huntington described militaries as 'human organisation[s] whose primary function is the application of violence', which in turn is regulated in democratic societies by the conduct of civil-military relations in formulating military policy.[47] When viewed in this way, whether or not military organisations follow their own agendas in organising and preparing for war is determined largely by the actions of individuals, or more precisely the relationship between civilian leaders and their military counterparts. A critical element of the Huntington thesis is the practise of objective civilian control which, contrary to the civil-military friction anticipated by Posen, encourages the emergence of professional attitudes and behaviour among the members of the senior officer corps, thereby ensuring that operational strategies and force structures are compatible with the security needs of the country. The pattern of civil-military relations envisioned by Huntington, in short, infers that civilian intervention in military affairs is the exception and not the rule, as professional military officers are quite capable of incorporating new roles and missions without prodding from their political masters.

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[46] Harold J. Leavitt, William R. Dill, and Henry B. Eyring, *The Organizational World*, (New York 1973), p. 4. Cited in Scott, p. 93. On the relevance of this strain of organisation theory in strategic studies, see Emily O. Goldman, 'Thinking About Strategy Absent the Enemy', *Security Studies*, (Autumn 1994), pp. 40-95.
[47] Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, (Cambridge 1957), p. 11.

A more recent application of the professional approach was conducted by Stephen Rosen. In his analysis of military innovation - *Winning the Next War* (1991) - Rosen argued that civilian intervention is unlikely to stimulate innovation without critical support from within the organisation, offered by senior military officers who have previously identified the necessity for change and are empowered to accomplish it. A civilian order to innovate without it, for example, would be rendered ambiguous by the lack of familiarity with the task requested, and complicated further by organisational resistance to civilian visions of new warfighting strategies and force postures. Rosen cites as evidence British defensive preparations in the 1930s, the same case offered by Posen to exemplify the urgency of civilian intervention as predicted by the bureaucratic approach. While agreeing with Posen that civilian intervention 'altered the balance of resources in favor of fighter aircraft', Rosen attributed the creation of the British air defence network to senior officers within the RAF who 'laid a sound intellectual organizational foundation' for the rapid construction of fighter aircraft and the successful incorporation of radar technology.[48] Had steady doctrinal development not occurred within the RAF beforehand, as fervently supported by Air Marshall Sir Hugh Trenchard, Sir Hugh Dowding and Sir Geoffrey Salmon throughout the 1920s and 1930s, civilian intervention would have been muted. Similarly, Rosen attributed the development of carrier aviation within the U.S. Navy in the same period to Rear Admiral William Moffett and the strategy he employed to press forward an innovative concept in a process that spanned over twenty years. 'It was a strategy', observed Rosen, 'based on shaping the process of generational change in the officer corps, and as such, must have appeared maddeningly slow to the young officers advocating aviation, but it worked'.[49]

In the end, Rosen concluded that there are multiple patterns of military innovation, but common among them is the role of senior military officers in determining when and how their organisations innovate.[50] Critical to his understanding of the process of innovation is the nature of the organisation itself. Rosen viewed military organisations as 'complex political communities', each with its 'own culture and distinct way of thinking about the way war should be conducted, not only by its own branch, but by the other branches and services with which it would have to interact in combat'.[51] While the process of innovation occurs infrequently, it first requires a strategic assessment of the security environment and then an 'ideological struggle' in which new military concepts and technologies are championed by senior officers on behalf of their subordinate advocates. The outcome of this ideological struggle, which often evolve over decades, determines whether or not these senior officers can sustain the innovation through the

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[48] Stephen Peter Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military*, (Ithaca 1991), p. 14 and 18.
[49] Ibid., p. 80.
[50] This point is also made in Murray and Millett, 'Military Innovation', pp. 301-328.

promotion of their supporters. 'At the practical level', explained Rosen, '[innovation] depends on a senior officer or a group of senior officers who first attract officers with solid traditional credentials to the innovation and then make it possible for younger officers to rise to positions of command while pursuing the innovation'.[52]

In sum, the professional approach emphasises *process* over *structure* when attempting to determine the sources of military conduct within and across national boundaries. Similar to the organisational perspective to historical naval analysis, it treats militaries as complex organisations whose perceptions of the security environment are framed by professional military officers in senior-level positions. While external pressures are indeed important in assessing the circumstances behind particular strategic and force structure choices, the professional approach does not presume that external inputs alone shape organisational outcomes. What occurs instead can be described as a confluence of external and internal inputs (ie., organisational culture, patterns in civil-military relations), which in turn influences the selection process to determine the appropriate warfighting strategies that reflect national security concerns. As agents of these choices, military leaders are deemed qualified to decide for themselves how they should organise and prepare for war, despite theories that suggest that civilian leaders are frequently compelled to intervene out of fear of military incompetence.[53] The interpretations offered by Huntington and Rosen, moreover, lend credence to the assertion that senior military officers and their ideas often shape organisational outcomes, so much so that their actions are seen to provide ideational context for explanations of military behaviour. As will be described further below, the third approach reduces the scope of analysis even further to consider the impact of these ideas as the cultural subtext to strategic and force structure choices in military organisations.

The Cultural Approach:
Ideas Matter in Explaining Military Behaviour

While the literature that exemplifies the professional approach assumes that cultures exist within complex military organisations, the cultural approach seeks to explain how shared habits of

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[51] Rosen, p. 21. See also Carl. H. Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis*, (Baltimore 1989), pp. 3-41.
[52] Rosen, p. 96.
[53] The reader should not infer from this that military leaders are infallible and render optimal decisions on all occasions, as military history is full of examples where military organisations did not adopt warfighting strategies that reflected strategic and operational circumstances. One well-known case of this was the persistence of the cavalry into the twentieth century despite the clear demands of the modern battlefield. Incompatible strategies and doctrines were also seen in World War I and Vietnam. On these cases, respectively, see Edward L. Katzenbach, 'The Horse Cavalry in the Twentieth Century', *Public Policy* (1958), pp. 120-149; Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front, and the Emergence of Modern Warfare, 1900-1918*, (London 1987); and Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army in Vietnam*, (Baltimore 1986).

thought among military officers shape organisational choices and subsequent action.[54] The approach emerged in the 1990s as an alternative to the neorealist conceptions of military organisations and their behaviour, as political scientists again borrowed central concepts and ideas from organisational research, including the revived perspective that *culture* and not *structure* defines organisational outcomes. 'All [cultural approaches] take the realist edifice as a target', writes Iain Johnston, 'and focus on cases where structural materiel notions of interest cannot explain a particular strategic choice'.[55]

Indeed, the explanatory power of the cultural approach becomes especially apparent when examining strategic developments in peacetime that occurred irrespective of civilian intervention, as emphasised in neorealist explanations of the same developments. Elizabeth Kier, for example, has argued that 'civilian intervention is unusual and can hinder the development of doctrine'.[56] She suggested instead that, while civilian decisions are not unimportant, strategic developments largely reflect organisational preferences that in turn are informed by the organisation's culture, which can be defined broadly as a set of attitudes and beliefs that are commonly held within the senior officer corps. On this point, Kier is supported by the observations of Ann Swindler, a prominent sociologist who argued that '[c]ulture influences action not by providing the ultimate values toward which action is orientated, but by shaping a repertoire or "tool kit" of habits, styles and skills from which people construct "strategies of action"'.[57]

In her book, *Imagining War* (1997), Kier challenged the conclusions reached by Posen with a cultural explanation of the strategic and doctrinal choices rendered in Britain and France during the interwar period. Of particular interest here is the fundamental difference that characterises the research methodologies used by both scholars, as Posen framed his arguments almost entirely upon secondary sources whereas Kier combines primary and secondary sources from which to base her observations. Indeed, a successful application of the cultural approach requires archival-

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[54] That the professional and cultural approaches are closely aligned is underscored by the fact that both Huntington and Rosen are advocates of cultural explanations in strategic studies. See Stephen P. Rosen, *Societies and Military Power: India and Its Armies*, (Ithaca 1996); and idem., 'Military Effectiveness: Why Society Matters', *International Security*, (Spring 1995), pp. 5-31.

[55] Iain Johnston, 'Thinking About Strategic Culture', *International Security* (Spring 1995), p. 41.

[56] Elizabeth Kier, *Imaging War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars*, (Princeton 1997), p. 12. Kier remains the only political scientist to date who has used the cultural approach to explain the strategic and doctrinal choices of military organisations. See also idem., 'Culture and French Military Doctrine Before World War II', in Peter J. Katzenstein, (ed), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, (New York 1996), pp. 187-215; and idem., 'Culture and Military Doctrine', *International Security*, (Spring 1995), pp. 65-93. Jeffrey Legro has also used the cultural approach to study a specific form of military behaviour - escalation in conflict. See Jeffrey W. Legro, 'Culture and Preferences in the International Cooperation Two-Step', *American Political Science Review*, (March 1996), pp. 118-136; idem., *Cooperation Under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During World War II*, (Ithaca 1995); and idem., 'Military Culture and Inadvertent Escalation in World War II', *International Security*, (Spring 1994), pp. 108-142.

based interpretations of this sort. 'Determining the culture of a military organization', cautioned Kier, 'requires an extensive reading of archival, historical, and other public documents, including curricula at military academies, training manuals, personal histories of officers, internal communications in the armed services, and leading military journals'.[58] Similarly, Jeffrey Legro has echoed Kier and contends that a military organisation's culture can only be unveiled 'by reviewing available internal correspondence, planning documents, regulations, exercises and the memoirs of individual members. These multiple sources provide a composite picture of the hierarchy of legitimate beliefs within an organisation'.[59] What is required by the cultural approach, in sum, is a broader scope of primary and secondary source materials, along with interpretative skills which should be equally familiar to both historians and political scientists.

From her review of these materials, for example, Kier found that shift from an offensive doctrine to a defensive orientation in France during the 1920s did not result from attempts by French civilian leaders to appear less bellicose for the purpose of attracting British support to offset the emerging threat from Germany, as first suggested by Posen in *The Sources of Military Doctrine*.[60] Her interpretation of these events suggests the opposite, that 'external balancing' was not the primary motivation of French security policy. 'France seem unconcerned about potential reactions to an offensive strategy', observed Kier. 'And in the late 1930s, British policymakers were alarmed that the French *did not* have an offensive doctrine...'.[61] Instead, Kier argued that the French Army gradually reverted to a defensive orientation at the behest of the senior officer corps, which since the Franco-Prussian War emphasised an offensive doctrine but instead chose a defensive posture following the introduction of short-term conscription in 1923. Simply put, French military officers could not conceive of implementing an offensive doctrine with short-term conscripts; they switched to a defensive orientation out of perceived necessity. While parliamentary action to reduce the term of conscription was indeed significant, French policymakers deferred to senior military officers in formulating an effective strategy to defeat Germany at the outset of conflict. That these senior officers chose to conduct a static defence was a reflection of the organisational culture that prevailed within the French Army. 'Thus, despite adequate funding, knowledge of offensive alternatives, and freedom from civilian interference', Kier concluded, 'the French army did not integrate offensive concepts into its doctrine, and

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[57] Ann Swindler, 'Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies', *American Sociological Review*, (June 1986), p. 273.
[58] Kier, 'Culture and Military Doctrine', p. 70.
[59] Legro, 'Cooperation Under Fire', p. 30.
[60] A critical review of this volume is found in Douglas Porch, 'Military "Culture" and the Fall of France in 1940', *International Security*, (Spring 2000), pp. 157-180.
[61] Kier, 'Imagining War', p. 51.

instead, after the reduction in the term of conscription to one year in 1928, became increasingly committed to a defensive doctrine. Its organizational culture would not allow otherwise'.[62]

As for the cultural approach as a basis for historical research, Kier also supported the notion that military organisations possess powerful cultures that have been shown in the past to intervene in upper policy debates and shape strategic decisions. Military cultures, in particular, are strengthened by responsibilities and assimilation processes that are both unique and unparalleled by conventional forms of societal organisation. Indeed, the teachings at service academies and other intellectual activities at institutions such as the U.S. Naval War College and the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, represent effective transmission mechanisms from which to instil within the senior officer corps a firmly rooted cultural framework to guide organisational practices and conceptions of mission- i.e., the traditions, professional ethos and historical experiences that are made available to successive classes of officers for future use in formulating strategy, tactics and overall policy.[63]

Yet, at the same time, it is indeed possible for a transition in organisational culture to occur within the senior officer corps, the process of which is analogous to the 'generational change' suggested by Rosen above and seconded here by Kier: '[O]rganizational culture is not the sum of the values and beliefs of a few individual members. Replacing a few leading officers is unlikely to give rise to a new organisational culture'.[64] What is required instead is a commitment to change, instigated at the behest of an individual or group of senior officers who are certain to encounter resistance from within the organisation as to the roles and missions of the service. 'Although it may be more difficult for leading officers to overcome the initial hurdle of recognizing that a change in the organization's culture is necessary', concludes Kier, 'once this barrier has been crossed it should be easier to impose a change in the military's culture'.[65]

That other cultural analyses of this sort are few and far between should not come as a surprise to political scientists, as the cultural approach remains controversial and subject to criticism, some of which is warranted when considering the primary research objectives espoused by the discipline. Most of the criticism levied on the cultural approach, in fact, has more to do with its theoretical shortcomings rather than its explanatory value to research endeavours where a thorough understanding of strategic choices is more important than assessing events that are 'generalised' and 'predictable' within existing theoretical frameworks. As one of the more vocal critics of the cultural approach within political science, Michael Desch argues that cultural explanations of military behaviour are inherently flawed precisely because of its theoretical

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[62] Ibid., p. 73.
[63] This point is also made in Murray, 'Does Military Culture Matter?', pp. 27-42.
[64] Kier, 'Imagining War', p. 152.

limitations, namely the absence of predictive elements in cultural explanations of military behaviour: 'Prediction...is central to the social scientific enterprise not only for theoretical reasons (we need theories to make predictions in order to test the theories), but also for policy analysis (theories that do not make clear predictions are of little use to policymakers)'.[66] In the same breath, however, Desch concludes that the cultural approach can be a powerful explanatory tool when presented with circumstances that cannot be explained via the conventional lenses most familiar to political scientists. When viewed in this way, cultural analyses can supplement neorealist accounts of strategic behaviour but not supplant them, especially in those cases where the structure of the international system cannot determine organisational outcomes. 'In such an indeterminate threat environment', observes Desch, 'it is necessary to look to other variables to explain various types of strategic behaviour. Culture and other domestic variables may take on greater independent explanatory power in these cases'.[67]

CONCLUSION:
THE CULTURAL APPROACH AND THE DECISIONS OF 1889

Despite its theoretical limitations in political science, the cultural approach provides naval historians with a new analytic instrument borrowed from the social sciences to assess naval policy formulation from an organisational perspective. When assessing navies as complex organisations, the cultural approach is especially befitting for its emphasis upon the *ideas and actions of naval officers* as potential motivations behind key policy decisions, as was the case with the decisions of 1889. This, to a large degree, contradicts much of what has already been written about them in the core naval histories, the best example of which is undoubtedly *The Anatomy of British Seapower*, perhaps the most widely cited volume on the Naval Defence Act. Confined to the 'policy-and-operations perspective' of British naval policy, Marder focused exclusively upon external factors that were inconsistent with the peacetime lull of the 1880s, all of which he attributed to fears of a Franco-Russian naval combination that failed to materialise. Similar criticism can be levied at the Mahan hagiographies which, because of an oversimplified image of naval policy formulation, understated the ideas and actions of other naval officers in shaping the course of American naval policy during the same period.

If the decisions of 1889 revolve essentially around strategic ideas – and the actions of naval officers in support of them - it is incumbent upon this thesis to trace these ideas from theory to practice in the policy sphere. As will be seen further in the chapters that follow, evidence of this

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[65] Ibid., p. 161.
[66] Desch, p. 153. Similar criticism of the cultural approach has also been registered in recent analytical products from the policy community. See, for example, Jeffrey A. Isaccson, Christopher Layne and John Arquilla, *Predicting Military Innovation*, (Santa Monica 1999); and Ashley J. Tellis et al., *Measuring National Power in the Post-Industrial Age*, (Santa Monica 1998).
[67] Ibid., p. 169.

progression can be seen in the manner in which strategic ideas were *inspired* by the lessons of naval history and which were later *institutionalised* and *implemented* in collaboration with naval officers in support of them. It is these three phases which, in sequence, describe how strategic ideas became firmly embedded in the strategic thinking that heralded the decisions of 1889, under the auspices of service patrons who championed these ideas despite political opposition to them. Also critical to understanding how strategic ideas progressed through these phases is an emphasis upon the personalities, institutions and events that linked naval officers with their intellectual conceptions as to the roles and missions of the service. Evidence of these linkages were in both cases found in departmental records, official and private communications, journal articles, newspaper submissions, personal memoirs, as well as the private papers of selected senior naval officers.

With this in mind, the next three chapters will consider the Naval Defence Act in Britain, which for comparative purposes begins with a critical assessment of the Marder account and the three conceptual pillars used to support it. Meant as an overview of the arguments in support of a revised account of the Naval Defence Act, Chapter 3 also establishes a nexus between culture, history and strategy of the Royal Navy, from which strategic ideas were inspired and unofficially passed on to successive generations of British naval officers until the formalised study of naval history in the 1870s made them a permanent feature in the postgraduate course at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich. Their resurgence is credited here to the writings and teachings of John Knox Laughton – the pioneer naval educator and historian – Chapter 4 then focuses on how these ideas later became institutionalised in the 1880s in a new brand of strategic thinking within the Admiralty and, more specifically, the newly formed Naval Intelligence Department. Finally, Chapter 5 considers the extraordinary efforts undertaken by naval officers to implement their strategic ideas within the larger context of naval policy formulation.

STRATEGIC REVITALISATION IN BRITAIN

Chapter 3

In the Shadow of Marder:
Two Perspectives of the Naval Defence Act

INTRODUCTION

For over 60 years, the study of British naval policy in the 1880s has been defined primarily by the research of the late Arthur Marder, whose special access to Admiralty archives in the 1930s led to findings later published in *The Anatomy of British Seapower* in 1940.[1] In what is undeniably the most widely cited reference on the subject, Professor Marder portrayed the Naval Defence Act as a reaction to widespread fears of a possible Franco-Russian naval combination. More specifically, the explanatory value of the Marder account rests upon whether or not the historian accepts three fundamental observations:

- British naval supremacy was in serious jeopardy in the 1880s, due mainly to the progress of naval modernisation in France and Russia, and the prospect that these two countries would somehow form an effective naval combination and succeed in defeating the Royal Navy. According to Marder, the Franco-Russian threat to Britain at the time was more than credible, inferring that the latter was falling behind their potential adversaries in such crucial areas as materiel, armament, and rate of construction.[2]

- Not only was the prospect of a Franco-Russian naval combination a serious challenge to British naval supremacy, but the threat was perceived as such by those responsible for naval policy formulation in and outside of the Admiralty. This is critical to the Marder thesis, as threat perceptions from external provocations form the basis of the British reaction that was eventually manifested in the Naval Defence Act. Marder refers to these threat perceptions and the reactions of British policymakers collectively as 'the navy scare of 1888'.[3]

- The strategic and force structure choices embodied in the Naval Defence Act were made at the behest of the Salisbury ministry and not from the Admiralty itself. According to Marder, Salisbury was compelled to intervene into the strategic calculus when a reluctant Admiralty Board, unwilling to concede the disparity in naval strength *vis-à-vis* France and Russia, remained adamant that it possessed sufficient numbers of battleships and cruisers to fulfil the roles and missions of the service in the event of war.[4]

With each of these observations, the Marder account defines the Naval Defence Act in terms of external provocations, threat perceptions and civilian intervention, which in hindsight is typical of how the 'policy-and-operations' perspective to naval policy formulation is misapplied to explain the strategic and force structure choices of navies in peacetime. Accordingly, the next

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[1] Arthur J. Marder, *The Anatomy of British Seapower: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era, 1880-1905*, (New York 1940).
[2] Ibid., p. 120 and 131.
[3] Ibid., p. 131.
[4] Ibid., p. 132.

three chapters were written with three critical tasks in mind: (1) To reassess the Marder account and offer in its place an organisational perspective that points to the ideas and actions of naval officers as the underlying motivation behind the Naval Defence Act; (2) To trace these ideas to the corporate memories of the Royal Navy and show how naval officers institutionalised them in a new brand of strategic thinking in the Admiralty; and (3) To highlight the extraordinary campaign by naval officers to implement their strategic ideas and in the process transform how policy deliberations were conducted among civilians and professionals. Each of these three tasks emphasise *the pervasive influence of strategic ideas among naval officers* and is reflective of the cultural approach to historical naval analysis.

The primary aim of the current chapter is twofold. With the Marder account upheld in recent biographies of Lord Salisbury, it first becomes necessary to reassess it in light of underutilised archival materials and the supporting research of other naval historians.[5] In shaping this discussion precisely around external provocations, threat perceptions and civilian intervention, the reader will quickly acquire an appreciation for how British naval policy in the 1880s was motivated more by the budgetary concerns of politicians than the naval threats posed by France and Russia. For purposes of comparison, this will be followed by an organisational perspective of the Naval Defence Act, as seen through an analytic lens which describes the decisions of 1889 generally in terms of the culture, history and strategy of the Royal Navy. The last half of this chapter, in particular, concerns itself mainly with the origin and substance of these strategic ideas. Their resurgence in the 1870s and 1880s is shown here to have occurred at the behest of John Knox Laughton, the pioneer naval educator and historian who encouraged naval officers to apply naval history to the solving of strategic problems in modern naval warfare. Whether he intended to or not, Laughton succeeded in inspiring a campaign for strategic awareness which culminated in 1889 with the formulation and passage of the Naval Defence Act.

THREATS AND PERCEPTIONS OF THREAT IN THE ADMIRALTY

With the vantage of hindsight, the threat posed from a Franco-Russian naval combination has been determined by other naval historians to be a product more of anxiety than of an accurate depiction of the naval balance between the three countries in the 1880s. Referring to the apprehension of British policymakers over such a likelihood, Theodore Ropp concluded that '[t]hese fears were largely illusory - even though France and Russia had signed an alliance in 1892, they did not enter into naval conversations until 1900, and the French naval command not only never considered the possibility of a union between the two fleets but was unanimously

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[5] Andrew Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan*, (London 1999) and David Steele, *Lord Salisbury: A Political Biography*, (London 1999).

opposed to it'.[6] Paul Kennedy also faulted the British for blowing the threat out of proportion, observing that 'it seems in retrospect that they probably overestimated the danger from this direction, forgetting the weaknesses of their rivals and seeing only those in their own fleet'.[7] What appears to be a clear and explicit departure from the Marder thesis, however, is in actuality a tacit admission that the threat posed from a Franco-Russian naval combination, or more precisely the misperception of the threat, was indeed the underlying factor behind the passage of the Naval Defence Act – known hereafter simply as the Act. In the end, Professor Kennedy would echo Marder and invoke a causal linkage between the threat and the actions taken by the Salisbury ministry: 'The prospect of a Franco-Russian naval alliance, which would pincer the under-strength Mediterranean Fleet and cut that vital line of communication in time of war, was too grim to be dismissed with soothing phrases and half-measures'.[8]

Thus, whether the threat was real, imagined or exaggerated, the Marder thesis remains undisputed so long as the mere perception of a Franco-Russian naval threat existed within the Admiralty in the years prior to 1889. With Admiralty records pertaining to the years in question readily available, especially the vast inventory of reports from the Naval Intelligence Department, it is indeed possible to retrace the steps of Professor Marder and to assess whether or not his thesis is sustained by the evidence. When reconciled with the relative naval strengths of both France and Russia in the 1870s and early 1880s, these reports reveal in the aggregate an objective appraisal of the strategies and effective forces available to both countries for deployment against the Royal Navy along *defensive* orientations. What is noticeably absent from these reports is any indication that the Admiralty was needlessly preoccupied with the prospect of a Franco-Russian naval combination and the threat it represented to the security of the home islands and the rest of the Empire. The rest of this section will expand upon Admiralty appraisals of the naval developments of France and Russia, with a particular emphasis on their respective strategies, fleet composition and trends in shipbuilding.

Naval Development in Russia

Given the importance of the Eastern Mediterranean to British access to India and other colonial possessions, it was entirely understandable for the Admiralty to be well informed of naval developments in Russia, even though Russian naval capabilities had never posed a serious challenge to British naval supremacy at any time before, during or after the Crimean War.[9] Even

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[6] Theodore Ropp, *The Development of a Modern Navy: French Naval Policy, 1871-1914*, Stephen Roberts (ed), (Annapolis 1987), p. 205.
[7] Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, (London 1976), p. 210.
[8] Ibid.
[9] For an overview of Anglo-Russian relations in the nineteenth century, see Andrew D. Lambert, 'Great Britain and the Baltic, 1809-1890' in Gören Rystad, Klaus R. Böhme and Wilhelm M. Carlgren, (eds), *In Quest of Trade and Security: The Baltic in Power Politics, 1500-1990*, Volume I, (Stockholm 1994), pp.

though the Admiralty in the latter stages of the Eastern Crisis of 1876-78 sought to purchase four ironclads being built in British dockyards for the Ottoman Empire and Brazil, the supplement in naval strength was viewed mainly as a measure to ensure that the vessels were not transferred to hostile parties. 'In none of the surviving correspondence regarding the "war scare" purchases of 1878', observed John Beeler, 'is there any indication that [the] Admiralty or cabinet was motivated by a sense of urgency, much less necessity'.[10] The Admiralty, after all, had other tangible evidence to point to when rendering its benign assessment of Russian naval forces and facilities in both the Baltic and Black Seas, the most likely theatres of operations in an Anglo-Russian naval war. During the 1870s, the Russian battlefleet was composed mainly of coastal-defence turret ships with inadequate armour protection and armament, a material weakness for a defensive force designed principally for coastal defence and not for offensive naval operations.[11] An American observer underscored this point in 1877, writing in his report that 'Except for coast defence, the Russian fleet is rather numerous than powerful. The *Peter the Great* and the *Minin* [an armoured cruiser] are the only two vessels on the list which approach the modern standard of fighting efficiency'.[12]

Attempts by Russia to redress the profound disparity in naval strength during the 1880s were largely an incremental enterprise. This, however, was not due to shortage of funds. On the contrary, the Russian Government since 1878 demonstrated that it was indeed willing to expend the resources necessary to subsidise an investment that was hoped to yield a naval force roughly comparable to that possessed by Britain. In fact, Russian naval expenditures steadily increased throughout the decade, from £4,200,000 in 1880 to £5,828,571 in 1889 - an increase of roughly 39% over ten years.[13] Admiralty estimates of Russian naval expenditures would seem to be more alarming; one intelligence report calculated that the increase in Russian naval spending increased by almost 54% during the same period.[14] The fact that this increase failed to stir pangs of anxiety within the Admiralty is indeed a testimonial to the level of overwhelming confidence in the multifaceted capabilities of the Royal Navy. It was also due to a realistic appraisal of relative capabilities *vis-à-vis* Russia. Given the complexities of naval warfare on the open seas, the British recognised accurately that the Imperial Russian Navy remained in a relative stage of infancy since the 1870s, while the Royal Navy was years ahead in terms of strategy, fleet

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297-334. For the impact of Russia in British defence planning, see Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tzar: British Policy and Russia, 1894-1917*, (Oxford 1995), pp. 111-143.

[10] John F. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era, 1866-1880*, (Palo Alto 1997), p. 203.

[11] Roger Chesneau and Eugene Kolesnik, (eds), *Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships, 1860-1905*, (London 1979), p. 172; and ibid., pp. 202-203.

[12] J.W. King, *European Ships of War and Their Armament, Naval Administration, etc.*, (Washington 1877), p. 167. Cited in Beeler, p. 202-203.

[13] John F. Beeler, 'A One Power Standard? Great Britain and the Balance of Naval Power, 1860-1880', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, (December 1992), p. 551.

composition, logistics and naval construction. It was more than obvious to Admiralty officials that the Russian battlefleet, such that it was, first had to learn to walk before it could run - and the Royal Navy was for decades accustomed to running at a pace heretofore unmatched by the principal maritime powers of the nineteenth century.

What informed this assessment of Russian naval capabilities were the periodic visits to foreign naval dockyards by the British naval attaché, who would then forward his observations to the intelligence department for analysis and dissemination.[15] When the opportunity presented itself, the naval attaché occasionally supplemented this information with observations made from his attendance at foreign naval manoeuvres, which in many cases provided considerable insight into the strategies and forces most likely to be employed in the event of war. Russia provided such an opportunity to the British in 1884, and Captain Henry Kane was quickly dispatched to observe the annual manoeuvres of the Russian Baltic Fleet. What he observed and later recorded about the manoeuvres only reinforced Admiralty perceptions of the backward condition of the Baltic Fleet, which in effect constituted the bulk of the Imperial Russian Navy.

His report contained observations that bordered on condescension for a grossly inferior naval service, including a notation that 'a great deal of practice was given to the [Russian] officers, if not in "manoeuvring" as we understand the word, at least in managing their ships'.[16] His most pointed and particularly insightful criticism was reserved for the absence of what was commonly known as 'steam tactics', that consisting of tightly choreographed geometrical evolutions controlled by flag signals between warships. 'Fleet Manoeuvring or "steam tactics", which the Russians were famous for, in theory, in the days of Admiral Boutakoff', Kane observed, 'seems to have been completely overlooked. They did not have a single day's drill of that sort. They never cruised in any formation but the single line ahead. They appear to have so devoted themselves to torpedo warfare as not to be able to think of anything else'.[17] The underlying objective of these exercises was also highly noteworthy, for it revealed Russian interests in evading the inevitable - an enemy blockade of Cronstadt and the defending squadron. Only the Royal Navy could have met the requirements of their hypothetical adversary.

In effect, the Russian naval manoeuvres of 1884 were merely a reflection of a naval strategy formulated along a defensive orientation, a fact that was later underscored by an article written by

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[14] N[aval] I[ntelligence] D[epartment] Report No. 119b, 'Present and Prospective Shipbuilding Policy of the Principal Maritime Nations', March 1889. ADM 231/15.
[15] Matthew Allen, 'The Foreign Intelligence Committee and the Origins of the Naval Intelligence Department of the Admiralty', *Mariner's Mirror*, (February 1995), p. 69.
[16] F[oreign] I[ntelligence] C[ommittee] Report No. 50, 'Naval Manoeuvres in the Baltic', October 1884. ADM 231/5. The Foreign Intelligence Committee preceded the establishment of the Naval Intelligence Department in 1887. See Chapter 4 for more on this subject.
[17] Ibid.

a senior Russian naval officer, translated by the Foreign Office and forwarded to the intelligence department in April 1888.[18] The report reinforced the notion that the Baltic fleet was in reality a coastal defence force of secondary importance to the army: 'It is difficult to admit the idea that Russia is striving for mastery over the Baltic. The attainment of this objective would not be worth the sanguinary struggle which it would involve, and moreover, the same result could be gained by Russian troops on the plains of Pomerania'.[19] As territorial defences of the Russian frontier, the author went further and advocated additional fortification of Cronstadt, so as to prevent the reduction of Russia's principal naval port by naval bombardment. When the same officer broached the idea of establishing a northern station in the Baltic, from which to dispatch forces to frustrate enemy blockading squadrons off Cronstadt, Captain Hall doubted the feasibility of such a suggestion. His written comments on the jacket of this report reveal the extent to which the Admiralty was well apprised of what the Russians could and could not do with respect to their navy: 'Recent reports in Russian papers lead me to think it will be some time before steps are commenced to make a military harbour inside the Gulf of Finland'.[20]

Visits to Russian naval dockyards proved to be equally informative, for the types and qualities of warships building there generally reflected their programmed roles and missions in wartime.[21] During these inspection tours, the naval attaché also recorded his observations of Russian shipbuilding practices and activities, as well as his predictions of the combat effectiveness of future additions to the battlefleet. For most of the 1880s, Russian activities in these dockyards were limited mainly to the completion of a small number of ironclads and cruisers in various stages of construction, most of which were begun in the late 1870s.[22] As a result, the Russian battlefleet of the 1880s consisted only of two first-class ironclads, four second-class ironclads (late armoured cruisers) and 21 coastal-defence ironclads.[23] Most of these vessels were unsuitable for extended operations abroad, particularly those in the latter category, a fact that spurred Russian shipbuilders to emulate British and French warship designs. On his visit to inspect the Baltic naval dockyards and facilities in early 1887, Captain Kane observed that 'the Russians pay great attention to English and French shipbuilding, and every detail concerning our ships is well known and studied here. There is a reading-room at the "New Admiralty" Dockyard, at which...English professional papers and magazines are more read than Russian'.[24]

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[18] Foreign Office to Admiralty, 18 April 1888. ADM 1/6933.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] I am indebted to Professor Andrew Lambert for this point.
[22] Donald W. Mitchell, *A History of Russian and Soviet Sea Power*, (New York 1974), pp. 192-197; and Fred T. Jane, *The Imperial Russian Navy* (London 1983) pp. 202-251.
[23] Beeler, 'British Naval Policy', p. 275.
[24] N.I.D. Report No. 118, 'Russian Fleet and Dockyards (The Baltic)', January 1887. ADM 231/10.

It was thus not surprising to the British when the Russians began construction of five new first-class ironclads between 1886 and 1888, most of which were roughly comparable to British first-class ironclads in terms of size and speed. Three of these ironclads - *Tchesma*, *Sinope* and *Ekaterina II* - were being built at Black Sea dockyards, while the remaining two ironclads - *Alexander I* and *Nicolas I* - were laid down in the Baltic.[25] A significant development in Russian naval modernisation, the progress of these new vessels undoubtedly attracted the attention of the Admiralty back in London, but the new construction did not seem to arouse any sense of unwarranted anxiety. While recognised as an 'important subject' by the Foreign Office, Admiralty records again reveal a well-informed yet muted approach to what could have been a contentious issue between the two countries, that being the implications stemming from the presence of three new Russian ironclads in the Black Sea.[26] In response to a request from the Foreign Office for more information about the new ironclads, Captain Hall provided a rather benign assessment of the new vessels, noting that their completion would by delayed until 1890 at the earliest. At the same time, Hall also referred to the deplorable state of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, noting that 'such a force can hardly be capable of coping with the ironclads Turkey possesses though these are not modern vessels and it is doubtful all are efficient'.[27] In his estimate, the presence of the three ironclads would indeed alter the balance of naval power between Turkey and Russia in the Black Sea, but their presence was more of a Turkish concern than a British one. 'But as there seems no disposition on the part of Turkey to acquire new ironclads', Hall observed, 'it is evident that in 1890, Russia with three powerful ironclads will be relatively much stronger than at present'.[28]

In sum, there is little evidence in Admiralty records to denote a sense of anxiety over Russian naval developments in the 1880s. Rather, the scores of intelligence reports and other correspondence to and from the Admiralty during this period reveal a very different image than that offered by Professor Marder in *The Anatomy of British Seapower*. The image presented above describes a confident and well-informed Admiralty, complete with an intelligence function perceptive not only of British naval capabilities, but how they also compare with the capabilities of the other principal maritime powers. Russia, as one of these maritime powers, lagged far behind the British standard for a modern seapower. The Imperial Russian Navy was largely a defensive force, a fact clearly recognised by interested parties in London and manifested in the frequent reports filed by the British naval attaché following his visits to Russian naval dockyards and facilities. What Russia considered to be a battlefleet, moreover, was more impressive on

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[25] Chesneau and Kolesnik, p. 172 and 178; and Jane, p. 223-229.
[26] Foreign Office to Admiralty, 11 June 1888. ADM 1/6934. The date of the response from Captain Hall was 22 June 1888.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.

paper than in action, as amply demonstrated by its mediocre performance in the 1884 naval manoeuvres. Between 1884 and 1888, Russia would embark on a shipbuilding programme to remedy its reliance on numerous but ineffective and obsolete coastal-defence monitors, but the future addition of five first-class ironclads was modest and simply not enough to bolster France in a credible challenge to British naval supremacy. For these reasons, it is quite understandable why the French considered any future cooperation with their incompatible Russian counterparts in the 1890s to be of minimal benefit. It is with France in mind that we now turn to British perceptions of the navy that would have been the senior partner in a Franco-Russian naval combination.

Naval Development in France

There were a number of factors that traditionally complicated the British strategic calculus when contemplating the prospect of naval warfare with France, much more so those likely to be encountered in preparations for a one-sided contest with the Imperial Russian Navy. The first two can be reduced to geographical and meteorological circumstances. The obvious distances between the three countries aside, Russian naval operations were largely hindered by the lack of unfettered access to naval ports and sea lanes in the Gulf of Finland, a shoal-infested body of water that is ice-bound for much of the year. For this very reason, the intelligence department in the Admiralty never seriously considered the employment of offensive coastal operations for the reduction of Cronstadt, but instead planned for a blockade to be established at the entrance to the Gulf of Finland.[29] The proximity between Britain and France posed a much larger problem, as the second largest naval power possessed an extensive coastline with a number of excellent naval ports, which included Toulon, Cherbourg, Brest, Lorient and Rochefort. The idea of an invasion force crossing the English Channel from French ports certainly brought about a considerable feeling of anxiety from time to time among British politicians and military officers. 'For the present the enemy is France', Lord Salisbury observed in 1887.[30] In the following year, he cautioned that 'France is, and must always remain, England's greatest danger'.[31]

The factor that mattered most in resolving this strategic dilemma, however, was the naval balance between the two countries, as British naval officers were confident in the knowledge that French naval capabilities between 1860 and 1890 were largely substandard when compared to the warships, personnel and administration of the Royal Navy. This was despite the occasional 'invasion scare' which, as we will see later, was a baseless yet convincing practice used to justify increased naval expenditures to reluctant government ministers. In fact, France was no more a threat to British naval supremacy than Russia, especially in the aftermath of the Franco-German

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[29] F.I.C. Report No. 64, 'General Outline of Possible Naval Operations Against Russia', March 1885. ADM 231/6. Written by Captain Hall himself, this report will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 4.
[30] Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury*, Volume IV, (London 1932), p. 50.
[31] Ibid., p. 106

War of 1870-71. In the years following a harrowing defeat on their own soil, the French were more preoccupied with overland threats from Germany than the prospect of yet another challenge to British naval supremacy. The French navy suffered as a result, as governmental expenditures were diverted to other priorities, chief among them was the rehabilitation of the army. 'For the majority of the decade', observed John Beeler, 'the French navy was deprived of the funding to maintain its existing navy, much less renew the challenge to Britain. The immediate need to rebuild and remodel the French military establishment, coupled with the futility of naval operations during the war and the necessity of paying a huge war indemnity, made naval construction a low-priority item during the years immediately following the humiliation'.[32]

In the 1870s, the French navy thus consisted mainly of wooden-hulled ironclads built during the course of an ambitious shipbuilding programme in the early 1860s.[33] These vessels were no match for British warships in the same category, the latter having been designed with durable iron hulls, watertight compartments and thicker armour.[34] By the end of the decade, the Admiralty estimated that the disparity in ironclads between the two countries was nine to five in favour of the British, who during the course of the decade completed the construction of 13 ironclads and eight coastal defence vessels.[35] In contrast, French shipbuilders completed only seven such vessels, three of which were originally designed in 1865 or earlier.[36] While the French managed to begin construction of nine first-class ironclads in the latter half of the 1870s, most of these vessels were completed between 1886 and 1889.[37] This trend in French shipbuilding would be greatly exacerbated in the 1880s by pervasive dockyard inefficiency, the burden of additional naval construction, as well as the frequent design changes made at the insistence of the *Conseil des Travaux*, an advisory board that convened back in Paris and was responsible for the approval and modification of warship designs.[38]

The Admiralty back in London was well aware of the problems that beset French shipbuilders, having been keep informed of their progress and working conditions by Captain Kane and his periodic visits to French dockyards. After one such visit in early 1884, Kane referred to the *Conseil des Travaux* as 'the final court of appeals on questions of naval construction' that was 'in the vein of altering many things'.[39] To underscore his point, he recounted the frustrations of a French naval officer, who lamented that 'it is impossible to know what one of our ships will be like when completed, but it is very easy to see what she will not be; look at the design on which

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[32] Beeler, 'British Navy Policy', p. 205.
[33] Chesneau and Kolesnik, p. 282, and Ropp, p. 41.
[34] Beeler, 'British Naval Policy', pp. 204-205.
[35] Ibid., p. 208, and Chesneau and Kolesnik, pp. 15-25.
[36] Chesneau and Kolesnik, pp. 283-291.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ropp, pp. 221 and 267-280.

they begin her construction'.[40] In this same report, Kane also provided Captain Hall and the intelligence department with some preliminary insight into the fractious atmosphere in the French Admiralty, contributed in part by the workings of the politically-motivated oversight board: "[T]he re-organisation of the *Conseil des Travaux* amounted to quite a revolution at the French Ministry of Marine, and was directed against M. De Bussy, who...had made himself too autocratic, and had forced designs on the department which were generally condemned....".[41] In sum, this report and those that followed were read quite enthusiastically by the Admiralty, and their contents undoubtedly shaped the outlook of Admiral Sir Cooper Key, who served as First Naval Lord from 1880 to 1885. In a letter to Admiral Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby in December 1884, Key exuded the level of confidence that was commonplace in the Admiralty, especially over the reported disparity in naval strength between Britain and France:

> We now have twenty-seven ironclads in commission. The French have eleven. We could commission thirteen more in a month. I cannot find that the French have more than two ready and one of these has her boilers condemned (*Richelieu*). Many of our ships are of obsolete types - so are many of theirs. Moreover, being of wood theirs cannot last long. *I should have no fear whatever with France and Russia now, so far as our Navy is concerned* [author emphasis].[42]

The situation in the French Admiralty would only get worse in the second half of the decade, before improving somewhat between 1887 and 1890. This can be traced not only to dockyard inefficiency and the workings of *Conseil des Travaux*, but also to the high policy naval debates that further divided the Ministry of Marine over competing schools of naval thought. The result was a incessant vacillation between naval strategies and capital ship design policies, as successive naval administrations selected their preference for one over the other. To complicate matters even further were the ascendance of Vice-Admiral Theophile Aube and his fellow disciples of the *Jeune Ecole*. These reform-minded officers maintained since the 1870s that French naval strategy should be based on the *guerre de course*, complete with a fleet of fast cruisers and torpedo boats to destroy enemy commerce and the vulnerable ironclad forces that protected it.[43] In January 1886, the views of the *Jeune Ecole* would receive a short-lived priority over all others with the appointment of its principal spokesman as Minister of Marine. Never reticent to express his views on the subject, Admiral Aube received Captain Kane in his office on 10 February for a general discussion of naval strategy. In his report subsequently filed to the Admiralty, the naval attaché recounted his meeting with the new Minister of Marine, including Aube's assertion that 'no blockade will now prevent fast ships from putting to sea, and that it is therefore impossible for

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[39] F.I.C. Report No. 35, 'French Fleet and Dockyards (South Coast)', May 1884. ADM 231/4.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid. Note that M. De Bussy was at the time the French Chief of Naval Construction.
[42] Cooper Key to Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, 2 December 1884. Printed in Oscar Parkes, *British Battleships, 1860-1950*, (London 1957), p. 328.
[43] For a general discussion of Aube and the *Jeune Ecole* see Ropp, pp. 153-180.

any nation to make herself Mistress of the Seas, in the way [the British] were after Trafalgar, however powerful she may be in ironclads'.[44] This and other comments made by Aube, however, did not have the desired effect of invoking any sense of anxiety within the Admiralty. Upon reading the report, Captain Hall merely noted that 'Admiral Aube's views on naval policy given by him to Captain Kane agree with those expressed by him in French periodicals before his accession to office'.[45]

It was thus no surprise to the British that in the first few months of the Aube ministry, the construction of the ironclads in the dockyards were either delayed - as in the case of the ironclads of the *Magenta* class - or halted altogether in favour of new construction priorities.[46] The lack of progress in building these ironclads, as evidenced first hand by the naval attaché, eventually prompted a staff officer in the intelligence department to claim that 'the armourclad fleet is not only now, but will be, when all ships of both nations building are completed, inferior to that of England...'.[47] The French instead exhausted their materiel and financial resources in the procurement of fast cruisers and torpedo boats. In the case of the former, the Aube ministry solicited designs for a number of cruisers of various types, the first among them a third-class cruiser of moderate tonnage with a speed of 19 knots and fair armament.[48] Three vessels of this description were eventually laid down in 1886, and the dockyards laboured to complete these ships as quickly as possible.[49] Also laid down in 1885-86 were two large first-class cruisers - *Tage* and *Cecille* - that were specifically designed for commerce interdiction and destruction, for both vessels possessed the speed, coal capacity and armament for such missions.[50] Finally, Admiral Aube sought funding for three more first-class cruisers, two second-class cruisers of an intermediate design, and six third-class cruisers, all of which were expected to be commenced in 1887.[51] All of these events, either in progress or expected, were known by the Admiralty in time to respond if necessary.

The Admiralty was also well-informed of the latest developments in French construction of torpedo boats and their experimental deployment in the annual naval manoeuvres. By the end of 1886, the intelligence department calculated that the French navy possessed 18 first-class and 39 second-class torpedo boats, with 51 of the former in various stages of construction.[52] The

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[44] War Office to Admiralty, 15 February 1886. ADM 1/6942.
[45] Ibid.
[46] F.I.C. Report No. 101, 'French Fleet and Dockyards', April 1886. ADM 231/9. See also Ropp, p. 172.
[47] F.I.C. Report No. 119, 'Present and Prospective Ship-Building Policy of Foreign Nations', November 1886. ADM 231/10.
[48] F.I.C. Report No. 112, 'French Fleet and Dockyards (North and West Coasts)', September 1886. ADM 231/10.
[49] Chesneau and Kolesnik, p. 309.
[50] Ibid., p. 307.
[51] See Footnote 48.
[52] F.I.C. Report No. 8Ba, 'Naval Dockyard Ports and LaRochelle', December 1886. ADM 231/10.

department also documented the sizeable budgetary request from the French Government, which Aube requested funding for 100 additional torpedo boats to be built over four years.[53] Over the protests of Aube, however, the government failed to accede to the broad outlines of the request.[54] But his failure to obtain the funds was the least of his worries at the moment. The experimental deployment of the torpedo boats in the 1886 annual manoeuvres in the Mediterranean was inconclusive at best, a mediocre result that was known shortly thereafter by the Admiralty back in London.[55] In the absence of the observations from the naval attaché, who for obvious reasons was not invited to attend the manoeuvres, the intelligence department instead secured first-hand accounts published in French periodicals. The subsequent report, written by Hall's assistant in the intelligence department, Captain Reginald Custance, referred to eyewitness accounts of French naval officers, who publicly expressed their doubts over the torpedo boat and its suitability for fleet operations.[56]

The results of the 1887 annual manoeuvres proved no better for the besieged vessel.[57] The performance of the torpedo boat was again left in doubt, especially when the remaining portion of the exercises were cancelled when Admiral Aube and the rest of the French cabinet fell from power in May 1887. While his tenure as Minister of Marine lasted less than 15 months, the aftermath of the Aube ministry revealed the extent to which the *Jeune Ecole* experiment was a complete and utter disaster for French naval policy. This point was underscored by Theodore Ropp, who observes that the '*Jeune Ecole* split the French Navy wide open, and the next fifteen years (1885-1890) was a period of incredible confusion.... [W]ith an increasingly complicated ministry, an increasing confusion in strategic ideas, and an increasing number of civilian ministers, it is a wonder that France had any naval policy at all. At times it is certainly difficult to find it'.[58] Aube's immediate successor was Edouard Barbey, who served essentially as a caretaker until the appointment of Admiral Jules-Francois-Emile Krantz in January 1888.

What was inherited by Barbey and Krantz was a French navy in a state of grave disorder, stemming mainly from financial mismanagement, dockyard inefficiency, and the existence of divisive opinions over the future course of strategy and force planning.[59] Burdened from deficit spending and debt incurred from private borrowings, both ministers initiated measures to remedy the rather deplorable conditions found by the new British naval attaché in his visits to French dockyards. In a report filed in April 1888, Captain Sir W. Cecil Domvile, who had succeeded

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[53] Ropp, p. 172.
[54] Ibid.
[55] For the French perspective of the manoeuvres, see Ropp, pp. 174-177.
[56] F.I.C. Report No. 108, 'Naval Manoeuvres in the Mediterranean', August 1886. ADM 231/9.
[57] N.I.D. Report No. 130 'Naval Manoeuvres in the Mediterranean', August 1887. ADM 231/11.
[58] Ropp, p. 178 and 180.
[59] Ibid, p. 181

Kane in 1887, related his observations to the Admiralty, noting that financial considerations were responsible for the reduction made of workmen at the Toulon dockyard from 5,000 to 4,400 since his last visit.[60] Following the necessary reforms advocated by Barbey and Krantz, the efforts of the remaining workmen were focused on the completion of contract vessels and the repairs of vessels already in commission. These efforts were given a boost somewhat by the prospect of war with Italy in the early months of 1888. 'There is no doubt that a month or so ago the French armourclads were in a deplorable state of unreadiness for war', wrote Domville in April, 'a fact of which apparently no notice was taken till recent political events brought war with Italy within a measurable distance'.[61]

In short, it was more than evident from these intelligence reports that the Admiralty accurately realised that the French navy was in no condition to pose a viable threat to Britain for some time, despite the publication of alarmist sentiments to the contrary. Admiralty confidence in this respect was so high that even the First Lord, Lord George Hamilton, relished the disparity between the two navies, boasting in February 1888 that 'many abuses and evils which we have eradicated here, flourish with exuberance in [French] dockyards, and the changes in policy and consequent waste of money in their building programme during the past two years contrast unfavourably with the continuity and consistency of action of the English Admiralty during the same period'.[62] Perhaps the best example of this perception of the French navy was ultimately reflected in the muted reaction by the Admiralty to alleged French naval provocations in the Mediterranean. In January 1888, *The Standard* published an account of unusual naval activity in Toulon, warning its readers that '[e]verything is being done to place a squadron of ironclads and all available cruisers in readiness to sail. The dockyard hands are working extra time'.[63]

Upon reading this newspaper account, Hall immediately requested the Foreign Office to ascertain further information that might shed additional insight onto the claim.[64] The response was inconclusive. The Admiralty was furnished with three conflicting reports, one from the British military attaché who reported that nothing unusual was occurring in Toulon.[65] This was contradicted by an excited Italian Charge d'Affairs, who claimed instead that the French were indeed mobilising a sizeable naval force in the Mediterranean; similar claims were relayed to the Foreign Office by the German Ambassador.[66] With an accurate sense of the political aims of both Germany and Italy at the time, Admiral Arthur Hood discounted the latter reports and opposed

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[60] N.I.D. Report No. 160, 'French Fleet and Dockyards (Toulon and La Seyne)', April 1888. ADM 231/12.
[61] Ibid.
[62] *The Times*, 4 February 1888, p. 12.
[63] D.N.I. to Admiralty, 21 January 1888. ADM 1/6932.
[64] Admiralty to Foreign Office, 21 January 1888. ADM 1/6932.
[65] Foreign Office to Admiralty, 2 February 1888. ADM 1/6932.
[66] Foreign Office to Admiralty, 3 February 1888 and 4 February 1888. ADM 1/6932.

any British reaction that would be considered provocative by the French. 'I think it would be advisable', cautioned the First Naval Lord, 'unless there are really reliable grounds for believing the preparations at Toulon have any other motive than the usual preparations for commissioning vessels in the summer, not to create feelings of distrust or tension in the French Government, by otherwise strengthening the squadron in the Mediterranean'.[67] Lord George Hamilton concurred with this view, observing confidently that there was no evidence to suggest that the French navy could support such an enterprise with any reasonable probability of success. He again referred to the fact that 'the French have a building programme far in excess of their financial supplies, and unless extraordinary credits to a large extent are voted, each successive year they will find themselves in greater difficulties, for they either continue finishing ironclads laid down 10 years back, or put off work on the fast cruisers already laid down'.[68]

Thus, instead of exploiting the occasion as a pretence to incite a panic over French intentions and the state of British naval preparedness, Admiralty reactions to the situation - as expressed by Hamilton and Hood - were muted by a well-informed perception of French naval capabilities. Clearly, these are not the utterances of men filled with anxiety over a former rival. France was simply incapable of posing a viable threat to the Royal Navy, either in 1888 or in the foreseeable future.

CIVILIAN INTERVENTION AND NAVAL POLICY FORMULATION

It is abundantly clear from the analysis above that both the professional and civilian elements within the Admiralty did not perceive Russian and French naval developments in the 1880s to be particularly alarming, anymore so than the hints at naval modernisation from Germany and the United States in the 1890s. This is especially apparent in the tone of the numerous reports generated by the intelligence department during this period, which as a whole instilled an image of the Admiralty as both proactive and extremely confident of British naval capabilities, an image that inevitably conflicts with conventional wisdom and the conclusions reached by Professor Marder. Indeed, the Admiralty depicted in *The Anatomy of British Seapower* is a much different entity altogether, complete with a complacent and ineffective Admiralty Board that was slow to respond to the naval provocations of France and Russia, and did so only when prompted by the intervention of the Salisbury ministry. At first glance, this would seem to be an accurate depiction of the events in question. But upon further inquiry the explanatory value of the Marder account can now be seriously questioned, as can its favoured combination of external

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[67] Foreign Office to Admiralty, 4 February 1888. ADM 1/6932. Hood surmised correctly that Germany's warnings about France were an attempt to push Britain closer to Germany, while Italy was hoping for a defensive naval alliance with England for the sole purpose of deterring French aspirations in the Mediterranean. For a general discussion of these events, see A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918*, (London 1954), pp. 304-324.

[68] Foreign Office to Admiralty, 7 February 1888. ADM 1/6932.

provocations, threat perceptions and civilian intervention. Having already shown the first two factors to be of marginal importance to the decisions of 1889, this section will consider the last factor: the impact of civilian intervention into the strategic and force structure choices embodied in the Naval Defence Act, with a particular emphasis on the roles of Lord Salisbury and his civilian appointees in the formulation of British naval policy in the late 1880s.

Salisbury and his Biographers on the Naval Defence Act

While two biographies of Lord Salisbury have been published within the past year, little is said about Salisbury's role in the formulation of the Naval Defence Act.[69] Yet according to Lady Gwendolen Cecil in a multi-volume biography of her father, it was Salisbury who presided over the cabinet-level strategic review and intervened when the Admiralty Board proved reluctant to concede the dangers to Britain from the potential threat of a Franco-Russian naval combination.[70] 'The attitude of the Board of Admiralty on this occasion - its failure to appreciate deficiencies until their existence was driven home to it by Cabinet cross-examination - presents a curious inversion of the parts ordinarily played by Service officials and their political masters'.[71] In a letter to George J. Goschen reprinted in the biography, Salisbury alluded to his repeated exasperation over Admiralty administration, and ultimately credited civilian intervention as the underlying motivation behind the Naval Defence Act. 'As to the mere question of enlarging the fleet', wrote Salisbury, 'we were able to do some good by making a sort of raid upon [the Admiralty] and carrying back the Naval Defence Act as the spoils of victory. But we cannot govern the Admiralty from day to day by raids of this kind'.[72]

While Salisbury ultimately claims the credit for the Act, the historical accuracy of his account is suspect for a number of reasons. The suggestion that Salisbury was attentive to the requirements of the naval service is first belied by the fact that at no time previously during his tenure as either prime minister or foreign secretary did Salisbury express an interest in British naval policy, other than that required to ensure that service expenditures were minimised for purposes of political expediency. He almost admitted as much in a rather acrimonious exchange with Viscount Wolseley in the House of Lords in May 1888, acknowledging that he could not remember ever having seen a plan of campaign before.[73] This is entirely plausible since Salisbury, like many of his immediate predecessors in office, always presumed that British naval

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[69] See Footnote 5.
[70] Cecil, 'Salisbury', p. 187 Marder cites the fourth volume in his own account of the Naval Defence Act, and even uses similar language to that employed by Cecil in her biography of her father. Marder, p. 143.
[71] Ibid., p. 188.
[72] Salisbury to Goschen, 10 February 1892. Cited in Cecil, p. 188. Goschen served in the Salisbury Ministry as Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1886-1892. He later served in the third Salisbury ministry (1895-1901) as First Lord of the Admiralty. See Arthur Eliot, *The Life of George Joachim Goschen, 1831-1907*, Volume II, (London 1911), pp. 155-160 and 201-224.
[73] *Hansard*, 3rd Series, 14 May 1888, Col. 105-106. ZHC 2/288.

supremacy would be just that, and never thought it necessary to depart from the *ad hoc* treatment of strategy and other defence policy issues before the Cabinet.[74] He especially resented the published opinions of naval and military officers who criticised the Government for its failure to attend to the more important matters of national defence. At the height of the public campaign waged by a number of prominent naval officers over the naval defences of the country - the subject of Chapter 5 in this thesis - Salisbury protested strongly 'against the tones of panic which prevail and the language which is used, as though the Government were [sic] passing by all these matters in utter apathy...".[75] This served only to reinforce Salisbury's rather cynical and long-held view of the professional element in military affairs. 'I think you listen too much to the soldiers', Salisbury once observed to Lord Lytton in 1871. 'No lesson seems to be so deeply inculcated by the experience of life as that you never should trust experts. If you believe the doctors, nothing is wholesome; if you believe the theologians, nothing is innocent; if you believe the soldiers nothing is safe. They all require to have their strong wine diluted by a very large admixture of common sense'.[76]

The Legacy of Gladstone: Salisbury and the Financial Dimension of Naval Policy

In spite of their vast differences on most political subjects, Salisbury was also no different to his political rival Gladstone when it came to the matters of naval policy, as both statesmen were acutely sensitive to public reactions to increased naval expenditures. Gladstone, in fact, believed strongly that the formula for his own political success and that of the Liberal Party rested in their ability to 'frame a budget large enough and palpably beneficial enough, not only to do much good to the country, but to sensibly lift the party in the public view & estimation'.[77] But to accomplish this required substantial reductions in naval and military expenditures. According to Gladstone: 'If we can get from three-quarters of a million upwards towards a million off the naval & military estimates jointly, then as far as I can judge we have left the country no reason to complain, and may proceed cheerily with our work'.[78] Upon his succession into office in 1868, Gladstone immediately instituted a policy of financial retrenchment and installed a reform-minded political supporter - Hugh Childers - as First Lord of the Admiralty. Accepting the view that the Royal Navy should be a *defensive* force and not an instrument of an interventionist foreign policy, Childers immediately sought to reduce naval obligations abroad and wasteful expenditures in the dockyards, while at the same time moderating current and existing shipbuilding programmes to

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[74] Edgar Feuchtwanger and William J. Philpott, 'Civil-Military Relations in a Period Without Major Wars, 1855-85', in Paul Smith, (ed), *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain*, (London 1996), p. 7.
[75] *Hansard*, 3rd Series, 11 May 1888, col. 5. ZHC 2/288.
[76] Algernon Cecil, *Queen Victoria and Her Prime Ministers*, (London 1953), p. 294.
[77] Gladstone to Granville, 8 January 1874. Printed in John Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, Volume II, (New York 1910-20), p. 482.
[78] Ibid.

prescribed levels.[79] The result were annual service estimates that were palatable to the fiscally conservative Gladstone. 'The first of Childers' budgets was indicative of the Liberals' naval and fiscal policies over the next five years', observed John Beeler in his seminal study of British naval policy during the Gladstone and Disraeli ministries. 'During the period [1868-74], naval spending topped £10 million only twice, in one instance from the addition of £600,000 allocated to the navy from the vote of credit occasioned by the outbreak of the Franco-German War'.[80]

Gladstone would continue his struggle to limit naval expenditures throughout each of his four ministries, and when in opposition would repeatedly denounce the Disraeli and Salisbury ministries for their extravagant use of the Treasury. During his famous Midlothian campaign of 1879 - which resulted in a Liberal victory at the polls and a second Gladstone ministry (1880-84) - Gladstone returned to a familiar theme that struck a chord within the public domain: 'If all the millions bestowed upon giving effect to the warlike policy of the Government had, instead, of being so applied, been thrown down to the bottom of the sea, you would have been better off, with such a mode of disposing of the funds, than you are now'.[81]

The success of the rhetoric used by Gladstone in the Midlothian campaign was not lost upon Lord Salisbury. In his own biography of Salisbury, A.L Kennedy observed that his subject 'appreciated at its true value the tremendous impression which Gladstone's exploitation of Conservative mistakes, and even of Conservative achievements, had made and was making all over the country. The success of the famous Midlothian campaign, indeed, had a lasting effect on Lord Salisbury...'.[82] Upon his own succession to the premiership in 1885 - and more permanently in 1886 - Salisbury no doubt realised that his own ministry would have to achieve a proper balance between military preparedness and the political necessity for fiscal parsimony and reform within the armed services. In effect, the popularity of the Gladstone message compelled Salisbury to emulate his political nemesis to some extent, if not with a strict adherence to the Gladstone policy of financial retrenchment but in a similar decision to install reform-minded appointees to the Admiralty. Until 1889, Salisbury was also willing to adhere to the Gladstonian approach to the annual naval estimates, using finance essentially as the final arbiter of naval policy. In this endeavour he was amply supported by his two civilian agents of naval reform at the Admiralty - Lord George Hamilton and Arthur Bower Forwood.

The Agents of Naval Reform in the Admiralty

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[79] Beeler, 'British Naval Policy', p. 154-55.
[80] Ibid., p. 59.
[81] William Gladstone, *The Midlothian Speeches, 1879*, reprint, (New York 1981), pp. 130-157. Cited in ibid., p. 169.
[82] A.L. Kennedy, *Salisbury, 1830-1903: Portrait of a Statesman*, (London 1953), p. 135.

The decision by Salisbury to appoint both Hamilton and Forwood to the Admiralty is of some significance when attempting to apportion credit or blame for the strategic, political and economic circumstances behind the Naval Defence Act. It is also indicative of the extraordinary countenance of Lord Salisbury and his competing desires to undertake a passive personal interest in naval matters while leaving it to his appointees to limit naval expenditures through increased efficiency in administration. 'Salisbury was fundamentally uninterested in military matters', wrote Andrew Roberts in his recent biography of the Tory statesman, 'and it took...a public, if hyberbolic, attack from the political Right to goad him into reforms'.[83]

Ironically, his decision in 1885 to appoint Lord George Hamilton to the post of First Lord reflected more of a desire to placate a dependable political supporter in the House of Commons than an intention to effect the level of reform necessary to restrain naval expenditures. Salisbury originally had every intention of appointing Hamilton to the War Office and returning W.H. Smith to the Admiralty as First Lord, an experienced naval and treasury minister who had held the same post from 1877 to 1880.[84] According to Beeler, Smith enjoyed a 'high reputation as an administrator and, by carrying out a comprehensive reform of the Admiralty secretariat, he showed that he shared other qualities with [Hugh] Childers' - Gladstone's own appointee to the Admiralty in 1868.[85] 'But as a man of business', continues Beeler, 'he fell squarely into the "economical" camp along with Childers, and both men...seem to have rated political considerations higher than the often alarmist pronouncements of their naval advisors'.[86] Given his utter contempt for service experts, Salisbury undoubtedly viewed Smith to be an ideal choice for what he had in mind for the Admiralty. But at the suggestion of Hamilton, Salisbury reversed his decision and appointed Smith to the War Office and Hamilton to the Admiralty, the latter insisting that he could not deal effectively with the Duke of Cambridge.[87]

With limited ministerial experience at the India Office and Education, Hamilton was a virtual neophyte when it came to naval matters. Despite his shortcomings of experience in naval administration, his entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* proclaimed his tenure at the Admiralty an unqualified success: 'Hamilton's administration was a period of extensive naval reform, during which the principles which were to govern organization of the fleet were formulated. Some great defects in departmental administration had been revealed, particularly in connexion (sic) with finance, repairs and shipbuilding'.[88] These achievements if true are indeed

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[83] Roberts, p. 496.
[84] Lord George Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections, 1868 to 1885*, (London 1916), pp. 276-277.
[85] Beeler, 'British Naval Policy', p. 244.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Hamilton, pp. 276-277 and Roberts, p. 330.
[88] J.R.H. Weaver, (ed), *Dictionary of National Biography, 1922-1930*, (London 1937), p. 389.

worthy of such affirmation, but the process in which Hamilton laboured to place the naval service within the 'compass of finance'[89] was in actuality more harmful than beneficial, so much so that his words and actions eventually invoked the consternation of Queen Victoria and even caused Lord Salisbury to consider replacing him. In June 1888, the Queen wrote to Salisbury at the height of the public debate over British naval strength and expressed her displeasure with Hamilton and his naval administration. She thought Hamilton to be 'not near strong enough' for the post of First Lord, and decried his propensity to 'declare *all* is *right*, which we *know* is *not*'.[90] Her concern for the course of British naval policy prompted a muted reply from Salisbury, in which he confessed that the discipline in the Admiralty was unsatisfactory and reassured the Sovereign that Hamilton was well aware of the 'great deal to be done' in order to remedy the defects in his administration.[91] In the aftermath of the debate and passage of the Act, Salisbury visited Queen Victoria at Windsor and broached the idea of replacing Hamilton with his original nominee Smith, who in poor health was unable to continue as Leader in the House of Commons.[92]

That Salisbury recognised early in his ministry that Hamilton was relatively inexperienced in naval affairs is supported by his decision to appoint Arthur Forwood as the Parliamentary and Financial Secretary of the Admiralty. It also impressed upon Hamilton and the naval element on the Admiralty Board of the political mandate for naval reform, as Forwood was not only an outspoken supporter of the Salisbury ministry but also a former mayor of Liverpool with 35 years of experience in the commercial shipping sector. 'Your commercial knowledge and experience would be of great value', wrote Salisbury in offering the post to Forwood in August 1886.[93] Forwood promptly accepted the invitation from Salisbury, and Hamilton welcomed his expertise to the Admiralty, despite the fact that his appointment was made explicitly at the behest of Salisbury and did not come from Hamilton himself.[94] His presence at the Admiralty was undoubtedly viewed with suspicion by the four Naval Lords, who were especially resentful of his meddling into the technical aspects of naval policy. In explaining his *modus operandi* to Hamilton, Forwood admitted that 'I quite appreciate that I may have departed from the course of my predecessors in dealing with some questions that have been before me in considerable detail'.[95] The traditional role of the Parliamentary Secretary, however, did not preclude him from

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[89] Hamilton used this term in a speech in February 1888 to describe his primary objective during his tenure at the Admiralty. *The Times*, 4 February 1888, p. 12.
[90] Queen Victoria to Salisbury, 8 June 1888. Printed in George Earle Buckle, (ed), *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, (London 1930), p. 413.
[91] Salisbury to Queen Victoria, 12 June 1888. Printed in Buckle, p. 414-415. Emphasis in the original.
[92] Extracts from the Queen's Journal, 5 April 1889. Printed in Buckle, p. 490.
[93] Salisbury to Forwood, 1 August 1886. Cited in Paul Smith, 'Ruling the Waves: Government, the Service and the Cost of Naval Supremacy, 1885-99', in idem., (ed), *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain*, (London 1996) p. 27.
[94] Lord George Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections, 1886 to 1906*, (London 1922), p. 35.
[95] Forwood to Hamilton, 17 November 1886. Cited in Smith, p. 27.

expanding his responsibilities in the Admiralty. 'For a business life of thirty-five years I have been in the practical management of ships and steamers', continued Forwood in November 1886, 'and with the knowledge thus acquired I cannot refrain from commenting on the papers that come before me. It may be that having this knowledge was a reason for placing me in my present position'.[96]

Forwood amply returned the contempt of his naval colleagues with an equally critical view of the naval element of the Admiralty Board. He reserved his harshest criticism for their attitudes toward the annual naval estimates, the overall form and content of which was a responsibility shared by him and the First Lord. Forwood simply viewed the civil-military differences over the estimates as a contest of competing motivations. As for his naval colleagues, Forwood privately held that '[t]hey have at hand the old traditional policy that the Service exists for the Service, and support the naval as against the civil control which so excites service feeling when called into action. The question of civil control of expenditure is more or less at stake'.[97] Lacking the subtlety and refinement for a minister in his position[98], his contempt for the Naval Lords eventually became a public spectacle, with statements to the press outlining his repeated frustration with them over such issues as the naval estimates, dockyard administration, and future shipbuilding requirements.[99] His antagonism of the Naval Lords - both in public and private - was so scathing in fact that it inevitably resulted in the second resignation from the Admiralty Board in less than three months, the first occurring in January 1888 when Captain Lord Charles Beresford resigned his position as Junior Naval Lord in protest over Hamilton's decision to reduce the funding and relative importance of the intelligence department. This time it was Vice-Admiral Graham who, as the Third Naval Lord and Controller of the Navy, chose to resign in April 1888 rather than continue to be subjected to the constant interference and criticism of the outspoken Parliamentary Secretary. For his part, Hamilton did what he could to restrain Forwood and preserve the appearance of harmony on the Admiralty Board, to the point where the latter felt that the First Lord was not providing his junior minister with the backing necessary to offset the demands of the Naval Lords. [100]

If Forwood worried that Lord George Hamilton would capitulate to the demands of his naval colleagues, it was a needless sentiment. When it came to the formulation of naval policy in the Admiralty, the First Lord was supreme and as such exercised complete control over the nature and conduct of business performed by the Admiralty Board. The responsibilities of each member of the Board were assigned by the First Lord, and subject to review and amendment when deemed

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[96] Ibid.
[97] Forwood to Hamilton, 24 November 1887. Cited in Smith, p. 32.
[98] Hamilton, 'Parliamentary Reminiscences...1886 to 1906', pp. 87-88.
[99] Smith, pp. 29-34.

necessary. The Board itself convened on a weekly basis, with the agenda of each meeting having been approved and distributed to Board members beforehand. Any member wishing to forward an issue for discussion at the meeting had to receive the necessary sanction by Hamilton before it was raised before the Board as a whole.[101] This arrangement was later confirmed by Admiral Hood, the First Naval Lord who once conceded to a House select committee that '[c]onsultation takes place at the Board on any point which the First Lord thinks it is right and advisable that the Board should consider and adjudicate upon'.[102] Since no votes were taken at these meetings, the role of the naval element of the Admiralty Board was hence limited to the provision of technical advice and additional consultation when requested by the First Lord.[103] The only viable recourse to a dissenting Board member was to offer his opinion in a minute to be included in the official record. His opposition then muted, the Board had no choice but accept and abide by the decisions of the First Lord. Alternatively, he could resign, in which case he would then forfeit his generous salary of at least £1,200 per annum as well as the house and other privileges afforded to a Board member.[104]

While Hamilton exercised the power afforded to his position sparingly and with considerable discretion, he was more than willing to allow the independently wealthy Beresford and Graham resign in protest rather than undermine Forwood and their collective efforts to place the Admiralty within the 'compass of finance'.[105] In this endeavour the two civilian agents of naval reform were strongly supported by Lord Salisbury who, along with the First Lord and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, were ultimately responsible for determining just how much the Admiralty could expect to receive in appropriations from the Treasury. It was then left to the devices of the First Lord and the Admiralty Board to identify the needs of the service and frame a budget according to the financial parameters established previously in consultation with Lord Salisbury. Salisbury, in fact, would later relate his account of the procedure in place to determine the level of naval appropriations before the precedent established by the Naval Defence Act, including his role as the final arbiter of naval policy: 'Questions of Estimate which are not settled by personal conference between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the War Office or Admiralty, as the case may be, are usually arranged in concert with the Prime Minister'.[106] His participation in the budgetary process, moreover, was seen as instrumental to brokering a reasonable compromise

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[100] Ibid., p. 33.
[101] *Parliamentary Papers*, Select Committee on Navy Estimates (1888), First Report.
[102] *Parliamentary Papers*, Select Committee on Navy Estimates (1888), Fourth Report.
[103] *Parliamentary Papers*, Select Committee on Navy Estimates (1888), First Report.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Beresford at one point attested to the discretion used by Hamilton in his dealings with the Admiralty Board. *Hansard*, 3rd Series, 12 March 1888, col. 938-941. ZHC2/285.
[106] *Evidence, Written and Oral, taken by the Royal Commission appointed to Enquire into the Civil and Professional Administration of the Naval and Military Departments and the Relationship of those Departments to each other and to the Treasury (known as the Hartington Commission).* HO 73/35/3.

between economy and service efficiency, particularly since '[t]he Chancellor of the Exchequer, little familiar with the defensive services, is rightly the spokesman of economy. The heads of the War Office and Admiralty, unacquainted with the precise position of the Exchequer, are the natural and proper advocates of efficiency'.[107] Given his role as arbiter in the budgetary process, it is thus not surprising that Lord Salisbury would ultimately take issue with the pointed criticism of Hamilton and Forwood in 1888 over the inadequacies of annual estimates and what the proposed budget actually meant to the traditional wartime roles and missions of the service.

Salisbury's Role in the Formulation of the Naval Defence Act

In the first six months of 1888, the Salisbury ministry was engaged in a rather extraordinary public debate between naval officers and cabinet officials over the strategic and policy implications of the naval estimates. As will be discussed further in Chapter 5, this was a most critical period for the supporters of naval modernisation, as their collective efforts in the public domain eventually compelled Lord Salisbury to react with a cabinet-level strategic review that essentially framed the strategic and force structure choices embodied in the Act. For purposes of this discussion, it is important here to underscore the public indifference of Salisbury toward the policy questions brought up in the course of the public debate, preferring instead to allow the principal spokesmen of his naval policy - Hamilton and Forwood - to respond in kind to the numerous speeches and editorials written by the 'service experts' that he despised so much.

His first definitive public statement on the subject was made on 10 May, when he felt finally responded to the serious charges levelled by the critics of his naval administration. In making this statement, Salisbury appeared to be motivated more by a desire to rebuke the service experts than to reassure the public at large that the naval defences of the country were exactly what they should be. He angrily protested that his silence was not due to negligence or absence of concern, but rather from his insistence that discussions of defence policy should held in private and not in a public forum. Salisbury then proceeded to defend the policies of his ministry, stating that 'there is no ground whatever for the implied reproach of parsimony and that we are neglecting the defences of the country'.[108] When it came to the subject of naval preparedness, Salisbury referred to the upward trend in naval construction, and even commented that the terms 'strength' and 'weakness' were relative and thus inappropriate to describe British naval capabilities. But Salisbury ultimately returned to the overall theme of his message. '[B]efore I sit down I feel that I cannot avoid to enter a protest against another practice. That is, the practice of those who are, or ought to be, distinguished authorities upon military affairs making statements against the

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[107] Ibid.
[108] *Hansard,* 3rd Series, 11 May 1888, col. 5-6. ZHC 2/288.

Government under whom they serve, and making them in a place where they cannot be answered'.[109]

In stressing his conviction that these policy questions should be addressed in a private forum by the Cabinet, Salisbury committed himself to conducting an *ad hoc* strategic review of the armed forces. In approving the cabinet-level initiative the very next month, Salisbury essentially conceded that he was reacting to what others thought was a necessary investigation to determine the military and naval requirements of the country. Selected to participate in the review were Hamilton and his counterpart in the War Office.[110] The scope of the review, however, was curiously limited to the traditional invasion threat posed by France. 'The one subject with which I propose to deal with is the alleged inability of our military organization to protect us from the invasion of London', Salisbury wrote in a memorandum to the participants on 6 June.[111] 'I presume the examination may be confined to the danger of the occupation of London by France, for an attempt by any other Power to conduct such an operation does not seem to be within the widest limits of probability'.[112] Salisbury, moreover, seemed more interested in the plans of the War Office to repel a French invasion than with Admiralty plans to prevent the invasion force from crossing the Channel in the first place.

The Admiralty initially contributed very little to the strategic review, that is until Salisbury agreed to allow the Naval Lords to submit a proposal for a shipbuilding programme on the basis of two hypothetical planning scenarios. In a subsequent memorandum, Hamilton confirmed the departure from the traditional budget-driven approach to force planning: 'The Cabinet in July determined that Admiral Sir Arthur Hood should be requested to state the amount of force which he would require under certain eventualities. The questions...were drawn up after personal consultation with the Prime Minister'.[113] Admiral Hood, in fact, offered to submit the proposed shipbuilding programme within a half-an-hour of being told what scenarios to consider.[114] He was able to make such a bold offer because the strategic framework for the shipbuilding programme had already been prepared in May 1888 by Captain Hall and the intelligence department. The opportunity merely presented itself to submit the ambitious proposal, which no doubt would have been rejected summarily had public attitudes toward increased naval expenditure not changed to render it politically acceptable to the Salisbury ministry.

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[109] Ibid.
[110] Salisbury to Cabinet, 'French Invasion (Most Confidential)', 6 June 1888. CAB 37/21/14.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Hamilton to Cabinet, 'Navy Estimates', 10 November 1888. CAB 37/21/24.
[114] Smith, 'Ruling the Waves', p. 36. Hood submitted the proposal on 1 July 1888. See Admiralty to Cabinet, 'The Requirements of the British Navy', 1 July 1888. CAB 37/22/36. See also *The Times*, 12 April 1889, p. 5, for references made by Hood to the proposal.

THE ALTERNATIVE TO MARDER: CULTURE, HISTORY AND STRATEGY IN THE ROYAL NAVY

As to who should be ultimately credited for the Naval Defence Act, the events outlined above simply do not support the version offered by Lord Salisbury and intimated in the Marder account of the circumstances that led to the formulation and passage of the unprecedented shipbuilding programme. Contrary to the Cecil biography and even his own recollections of the events of 1888, Salisbury was clearly not the saviour of the naval defences of the country, nor was he remotely interested in naval affairs other than what was required of him during the annual budgetary process. Instead, it was Salisbury who reacted indignantly to the public campaign organised by naval officers following the Beresford resignation in January 1888.

With the campaign victorious in the battle for public opinion, the prime minister quickly consented to a cabinet-level strategic review which at first focused mostly on the army and little on the navy. Discussion ultimately turned to the issue of naval preparedness, upon which Salisbury acted upon to embrace the demand for naval modernisation. The Admiralty Board responded to this shift in his priorities quite enthusiastically, having submitted within hours a proposal for an ambitious shipbuilding programme that was based on hypothetical planning scenarios already considered by the Naval Intelligence Department. The Board was well aware for some time of the naval capabilities of its potential adversaries relative to that of the Royal Navy; what it lacked was a healthy appreciation of the implications posed by the absence of a clearly articulated strategic doctrine and how that void compromised the future capabilities of the service to perform its traditional roles and missions. But this was a strategic dilemma that Salisbury and his agents of naval reform had very little interest in resolving until faced essentially with a *fait accompli* by the Admiralty Board in July 1888. From that point forward, Admiralty force planning would be determined more by naval professional arguments than the economic constraints imposed for purposes of political parsimony.

Then who or what should ultimately be credited for the Naval Defence Act? As shown above, the answer to this question lies not in the Marder account and the combination of external provocations, threat perceptions and civilian intervention. The evidence suggests instead that the underlying motivation for the Act originated not from external factors but from the strategic ideas shared by naval officers, whose role in strategic and force planning had been overshadowed by the political agendas of the Gladstone and Salisbury ministries in the 1880s. Fearing that these ideas were being muddled by administrative complacency, technological determinism and a general failure to enunciate a coherent strategic doctrine from which to contemplate future shipbuilding requirements, a series of respected naval officers attempted in the late 1870s and 1880s to promote a new brand of strategic thinking and essentially rescue the Admiralty Board

from itself. The first opportunity to do so occurred in late 1882, when the Board authorised the creation of the Foreign Intelligence Committee, supervised by a talented officer who would later transform the *ad hoc* committee into a full-fledged department. By the time Captain W.H. Hall departed from the Admiralty in January 1889, the first D.N.I. had established an intellectual tradition that would be sustained by other strategic thinkers appointed to the position, including among them Cyprian Bridge, Lewis Beaumont, Reginald Custance, Prince Louis of Battenberg, Charles Ottley, Edmund Slade and even his own son, Reginald 'Blinker' Hall.

The second important event of this kind occurred in 1886, when Captain Lord Charles Beresford was nominated by the Prince of Wales to serve as Junior Naval Lord on the Admiralty Board.[115] Beresford was a reform-minded officer who also grasped the necessity for both the civilian and naval elements within the Admiralty to embrace the demands for increased strategic awareness in upper level policy debates. He quickly sought to expand and formalise the intelligence function from an *ad hoc* committee to a full-fledged department, and resigned in protest when he viewed salary cutbacks in the newly created department as a reduction of the overall value of the tasks performed by Hall and his small staff of officers.[116] Fearing that the Admiralty would return to business as usual, Beresford enlisted the patronage of other prominent naval officers - Admiral Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby and Rear-Admiral Philip Colomb in particular – so that together they could organise an extraordinary campaign to pressure the Salisbury ministry to reform the process in which naval policy was formulated in the Admiralty. What they achieved during the course of this six-month campaign was a firm repudiation of the naval policies favoured by the Salisbury ministry. Eventually, even the editor of *The Times*, George E. Buckle, who had originally sided with ministry only months before on this issue, was persuaded by professional opinion. An admirer of Salisbury and his policies[117], Buckle warned the government in May 1888 of the public support emerging in favour of naval modernisation, inspired by the months of speeches, editorials and papers written by Beresford and others: '[T]he country will not now be satisfied until the Government is able to assure it that, whatever plan of defence may be ultimately adopted, the Navy is strong enough to carry it into effect'.[118] The desired effect of these sentiments was achieved in July 1888, with the proposed shipbuilding programme that later became authorised by the Naval Defence Act.

The Inspiration of Strategic Ideas: Culture, History and Strategy

While these two events will be discussed at greater length in the next two chapters, the rest of this section will consider the origin and substance of the strategic ideas shared among British

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[115] Roberts, p. 558.
[116] Allen, pp. 71-74.
[117] Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain*, (Chapel Hill 1981), p. 296.

naval officers, as well as their intellectual revival in the 1880s. As would be expected when linking organisational culture to military decisionmaking, these ideas were largely expressions of strategic predispositions firmly rooted in the wartime experiences of their predecessors - the naval element to what has been described as the 'British way in warfare'.[119] British naval officers were taught from the earliest stages of their careers that naval predominance was the only means to ensure the copious flow of commerce while protecting the home islands from invasion. From the words and actions of their predecessors they further viewed the exploitation of British naval supremacy as the logical outgrowth of a forward offensive naval strategy, itself founded on a commonly held belief within the service that the territorial boundaries of the British Empire extended beyond the demarcations of maps or charts. 'The frontier of the our Empire is the enemy's coastline', Colomb remarked in May 1888. 'At the beginning of this century, there was a certain defined way of looking at the situation of these islands surrounded by water, at the water surrounding them, and at the possible enemies' coasts which bounded the water. Our islands were strictly regarded as the capital of an empire, surrounded by a water territory, the frontier of which was the enemy's coast'.[120]

The underlying essence of this linkage between culture, history and strategy in the Royal Navy during the nineteenth century is ultimately captured by the fact that, between 1650 and 1815, British naval officers gradually developed a highly effective strategic doctrine but never once felt it necessary to promulgate it in service manuals or sweeping doctrinal pronouncements. Instead, the senior officers corps of the service themselves inculcated the next generation of British naval officers, and ensured that their successors were intellectually prepared to fulfil the traditional roles and missions of the Royal Navy. This point is underscored by the research of Andrew Lambert, who has pointed out that '[t]he Royal Navy did not create doctrine in the nineteenth century, in contrast to the French, Russian, American and German navies, because it was neither rebuilding after defeat nor creating a new service. It relied on its corporate memory, its history for guidance. The transmission of this knowledge was a major part of the intellectual development of career sea officers'.[121] The currency of British strategic doctrine in the nineteenth century, and later in the twentieth century as well, was thus founded in the shared interpretations of historical precedent. Looking to the past reminded naval officers of the strategic benefits of the close blockade and other traditional applications of British naval policy. From 1815 through to about the mid-1850s,

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[118] *The Times*, 25 May 1888, p. 9.

[119] For more on the naval component of the British way in warfare, see David French, *The British Way in Warfare 1688-2000*, (London 1990).

[120] Cited in [John Knox Laughton], 'Naval Supremacy and Naval Tactics', *Edinburgh Review*, (January 1890), p. 148.

[121] Andrew D. Lambert, 'The Royal Navy, 1856-1914: Deterrence and the Strategy of World Power', in Elizabeth J. Errington and Keith Neilson, (eds), *Navies and Global Defense: Theories and Strategy*, (Westport 1996), p. 81.

the principal expression of British naval strategy in peacetime remained the impressive power projection capabilities of a heavily-armed wooden battlefleet under sail, consisting of two and three-decked warships that were capable of conducting offensive missions such as the blockade and coastal bombardment.

Perhaps the best reflection of the strategic traditions of the Royal Navy occurred in the period between 1840 and 1860, while the Admiralty was dealing with the potential of steam propulsion and the implications to both naval strategy in general and the future determinants of capital ship design policy. In what became known as the 'Cherbourg Strategy', the Admiralty planned for renewed naval operations to thwart a French invasion of the home islands following the completion of a well-fortified naval base and dockyard at Cherbourg, on the northwest coast of France.[122] The primary objective of this strategy was to ensure British naval supremacy in the Channel through the blockade and eventual destruction of the new naval base and dockyard. To accomplish the latter task, Admiralty planners exploited the lessons learned during the last naval campaign against France. 'The logic of war at sea after 1805 suggested that the Royal Navy would face its most difficult tasks ashore, or even inside the arsenals of its rivals', continued Lambert.[123] 'In consequence of a new strand of naval thought, pioneered during the Napoleonic conflict, employed technology to enhance the capability of warships to act against the shore, both for amphibious power projection and for the direct assault of fortified harbours'.[124] The strand that Lambert refers to here is an important corollary to the forward offensive naval strategy that prevailed within the Royal Navy during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While blockading operations would ensure command of the sea for Britain, the employment of offensive coastal operations would ensure the destruction of the enemy battlefleet once command of the sea was no longer in doubt. This combination proved especially useful when the enemy was predisposed to safeguard its 'fleet-in-being' rather than risk the loss of its naval assets at sea in a contest with the Royal Navy.

After the technological uncertainties of the 1860s and 1870s, the Royal Navy gradually began to regain its traditional strategic footing, due mainly to the widespread introduction of water-tube boilers and triple-expansion engines in British capital ship designs. With faster and more efficient steam engines, the application of the close blockade was again feasible to thwart the egress of commerce-raiders from enemy ports. Meanwhile, offensive coastal operations continued to remain an essential mission of the service, as evidenced by the Egyptian campaign and the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882. It became abundantly clear at the outset of the decade,

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[122] For more on British reactions to the naval base at Cherbourg, see Andrew D. Lambert, The *Last Sailing Battlefleet: Maintaining Naval Mastery 1815-1850*, (London 1991), p. 11.
[123] Lambert, 'The Royal Navy, 1856-1914', p. 78.
[124] Ibid.

however, that the Admiralty had yet to emerge from the 1860s and 1870s with a clear sense of the roles and missions it was expected to perform, compounded further by the bewilderment over the optimal mixture of forces required to accomplish them. This point was again underscored by Beeler: 'The British navy was expected (and did) perform a multitude of operations worldwide. This salient fact largely explains why the formulation of a coherent strategy, and, much more, the construction of a fleet with which to implement it, were so problematic during the mid-Victorian era'.[125] What was required in the Admiralty were civilian ministers and naval officers who shared an avid interest in strategic issues and could work together to devise a force structure that best reflected the roles and missions of the service in wartime. That these men were largely absent from the Admiralty in the 1880s was a function of individual personalities and the appointment of senior naval officers who were generally amenable to the political mandate of the First Lord.

It soon became evident that if the Admiralty was ever to embrace the demand for heightened strategic awareness, the impetus for such an overture would have to originate from within the senior officer corps, particularly from officers with the intellectual foundation and strategic vision to articulate the future requirements of the service. The officers who qualified for this distinction were undoubtedly encouraged by the writings and teachings of Sir John Knox Laughton, the influential naval educator and historian who advocated from the 1870s that history was the servant of strategic naval thought and as such was the basis for the development of modern tactics, service doctrine and national strategy.[126] What appealed to these naval officers was Laughton's revival of the strategic ideas that had been obfuscated by the economic and technological determinism that defined British naval policy in the 1860s and 1870s. Laughton, a naval instructor who served in the Baltic campaigns of 1854 and 1855, first gained widespread notoriety in the service as a distinguished lecturer in naval history at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich. The audience that he wished to influence most during the course of these annual lecture courses were the junior officers in attendance at the college, among them future flag officers and framers of naval policy.

But his initiative and enthusiasm for the subject gradually expanded the audience to include most of the senior officer corps of the service. His most important convert was Admiral Sir Astley Cooper-Key, the first President of the College at Greenwich and First Naval Lord from 1879 to 1885.[127] Cooper-Key encouraged Laughton to continue his academic pursuits and

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[125] Ibid., p. 234.

[126] For the definitive historical treatment of Sir John Knox Laughton and the formal study of naval history, see Andrew Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History: John Knox Laughton, the Royal Navy and the Historical Profession*, (London 1998); and idem., 'History, Strategy and Doctrine: Sir John Knox Laughton and the Education of the Royal Navy', in William B. Cogar, (ed), *New Interpretations in Naval History: Selected Papers from the Twelfth Naval History Symposium*, (Annapolis 1996), pp. 173-187.

[127] Lambert, 'Foundations', pp. 34, 46-49 and 74.

introduce them to the mainstream of strategic naval thought. In his presence in 1874, Laughton read a seminal paper at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) on 'The Scientific Study of Naval History'.[128] In this paper he argued that naval history, if properly studied with accurate and exact knowledge, can yield insightful lessons that are just as relevant in the ironclad era as they once were in the age of sail. 'I have argued against the idea that the study of naval history is useless - is a waste of time; I have argued that, on the contrary, it is a study of vital importance, and that the lessons it conveys are of very direct and practical meaning'.[129] In the following year, Laughton reminded his listeners and readers that the study of naval history extended beyond mere tactical considerations. 'A great deal has been said at different times about the study of tactics, but the scientific study of history is the study of tactics; it is a great deal more; it is the study of strategy, of organisation, and of discipline, and it is the only sound basis of that study'.[130]

Remaining at his teaching post at the Royal Naval College until 1885, Laughton received preferential access to the Admiralty archives and continued to promote a mode of strategic thinking that applied naval history to the solving of strategic problems in modern naval warfare. In this endeavour he received considerable support from the intellectual elite of the senior officer corps, chief among them Admiral Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby and Rear-Admiral Philip Colomb. Hornby for one was an ardent supporter of Laughton, so much so that the naval historian honoured Hornby by dedicating his *Letters and Despatches of Horatio, Viscount Nelson* (1886) to him. Colomb also came to share Laughton's enthusiasm for naval history, and was later appointed to succeed him as lecturer in naval history at the Naval War College in 1887.[131] Beside these two prominent naval officers, both of whom would later play critical roles in the public campaign for heightened strategic awareness in 1888, Laughton also interacted extensively with a number of current and future strategic thinkers in the newly formed intelligence department in the Admiralty. During the critical years of 1888 and 1889, for example, Laughton came into frequent contact with Captains Reginald N. Custance and S.M. Eardley-Wilmot, both of whom were active members of RUSI and had served on the executive council of the semi-official think tank with Laughton.[132] He was also well acquainted with the D.N.I., having previously served with Captain Hall for three years while onboard the Gunnery Training Ship H.M.S. *Excellent.*[133] In later years, the appointment of Captains Cyprian A.G. Bridge - Laughton's oldest friend and intellectual companion - and Prince Louis of Battenberg to the intelligence department brought Laughton

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[128] J.K. Laughton, 'The Scientific Study of Naval History', *RUSI Journal* (1874).
[129] Ibid., p. 525.
[130] J.K. Laughton, 'Scientific Instruction in the Royal Navy', *RUSI Journal* (1875), p. 233-34.
[131] Lambert, 'Foundations', p. 106.
[132] Custance and Eardley-Wilmot served on the council between 1888-1890. During this period, Laughton was listed as a corresponding member of the council. During these years, the members of the council were each listed on the first page of each volume of the *RUSI Journal.*
[133] The relationship between Laughton and Hall will be considered further in Chapters 4 and 8.

even closer to strategic ruminations within the Admiralty. Thus, while Laughton never overtly sought to influence the framing of British naval policy during the 1880s, his imprint on the strategic thinking that inspired the Naval Defence Act is unmistakable and hence subject to reassessment.

CONCLUSION

By retracing the steps of Professor Marder in his historical treatment of the Naval Defence Act, this chapter has at great length documented the failed characterisations of British naval policy formulation in the 1880s and the 'policy-and-operations' perspective used to support them. This was accomplished mainly by focusing upon each of three external factors upon which the Marder account was based, with the expectation that a new image of the Admiralty and how it conducted its business in the 1880s would emerge in their place. In the process, it was revealed that the Admiralty of the 1880s was not overly concerned with the naval developments of France and Russia, as regular intelligence updates bolstered Admiralty confidence in the favourable disparities in their respective naval capabilities. Neither was civilian intervention a significant factor in the events that led to the formulation of the Naval Defence Act. Contrary to the recollections of Salisbury and even the assertions of his biographers, credit for the shipbuilding programme ultimately belongs to naval professionals, whose actions in support of their strategic ideas ensured that policy deliberations would hence forward be conducted with a heightened degree of strategic awareness.

If, however, the Royal Navy is treated as a complex organisation, as consistent with the organisational perspective to naval policy formulation, the Naval Defence Act stands out as example of how key policy decisions made in peacetime often reflect the shaping influence of internal factors such as the ideas and actions of naval officers. In the absence of threats from abroad and civilian pressures at home, the impetus for British naval modernisation came from the pervasive influence of strategic ideas, which in the 1870s and 1880s were translated from theory into practice by the manner in which they were inspired, institutionalised and finally implemented in the policymaking process. While the last section of this chapter has touched briefly on each of these three phases, it has dealt mainly with the inspiration of strategic ideas, with a particular emphasis upon their resurgence in the 1870s due to the writings and teachings of John Knox Laughton. The next two chapters will show how these ideas coalesced into a new brand of strategic thinking within the realm of Admiralty policy, as exemplified first in Chapter 4 by the formation and agenda of the intelligence function between 1882 and 1889. Also highlighted in this chapter is the extent to which bureaucratic pressures threatened the existence of the department, in the wake of an innovative force planning model developed by the D.N.I. in late 1887 and which was immediately suppressed in favour a budget-driven approach advocated by

the Salisbury ministry. Chapter 5 will then focus on the aftermath of the move against the intelligence department and, in particular, the struggle between politicians and professionals for primacy over naval policy formulation, spurred in part by an extraordinary effort undertaken by senior naval officers to implement their strategic ideas in the policy deliberations that led to the Naval Defence Act.

Chapter 4

From Theory into Practice:

Ideas, Institutions and the Intelligence Function in the Admiralty, 1882-1889

INTRODUCTION

The creation of an intelligence function in the Admiralty was the first significant step toward institutionalising the strategic ideas revived in the 1870s by John Knox Laughton and the formalised study of naval history.[1] A critical improvement in how the Admiralty conducted its business in the 1880s, the occasion also marked the origins of a future struggle between politicians and professionals over a controversial budget-driven approach to naval policy formulation. The purpose of this chapter is to consider the formation and agenda of the intelligence function between 1882 and 1889, with a particular emphasis upon a new brand of strategic thinking that appeared in Admiralty planning documents and which reflected the evolving use of British naval history in the solving of strategic and tactical problems associated with modern naval warfare. Also of interest here is the expansion of the intelligence function from an *ad hoc* committee to a full-fledged department, which occurred at the urging of naval officers who were convinced that Admiralty preparations for war would be incomplete in the absence of intelligence collection and strategic planning. Among them was the first Director of Naval Intelligence, Captain W.H. Hall, who quickly secured a broad mandate for the new department so that he could instil a heightened degree of strategic awareness in the most essential aspects of British naval administration. In the process, Hall incited considerable bureaucratic opposition from his primary consumer – the Admiralty Board – whose most senior members reacted negatively to the initiatives undertaken by the department, most notably the submission of an innovative force planning model in December 1887. A review of these events is of particular importance to this study, as it will show how the ideas and actions of naval officers were responsible for transforming a minor controversy over the intelligence department into a public debate that led to the strategic and force structure choices embodied in the Naval Defence Act.

THE ORIGINS AND WORK OF THE FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE

In the present age, it would be quite unusual for a military service not to possess a specialised department responsible for the collection, analysis and dissemination of information that, in theory, would inform relevant staff of potential threats and their implications to the present course of strategy development and force planning. The security environment, however, was much different for the Royal Navy in the midst of a century of peace following the defeat of Napoleon in 1814. Simply put, the Admiralty saw little need for the creation of such a department when it was the recipient of incremental intelligence of foreign naval developments from either the Foreign or War Offices, and in many cases from its own Department of Hydrography, which systemically collected pertinent information while conducting navigational surveys abroad.

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[1] A version of this chapter has recently been published by the author. See Robert E. Mullins, 'New Ways of Thinking: The Intelligence Function and Strategic Calculations in the Admiralty, 1882-1889', *Intelligence and National Security*, (Autumn 2000), pp. 77-97.

The first major effort to enlarge the Admiralty to include an intelligence function originated in the 1870s, when Admiral Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby took particular exception to the absence of a professional staff that in his view would be instrumental in assisting the Naval Lords in the matters of strategy, wartime mobilisation and force planning.[2] The son of Admiral Sir Phipps Hornby, who served with Lord Nelson onboard H.M.S. *Victory* in 1804, Hornby at the time was emerging as the most respected member of the senior officer corps. Aware of his status and considerable influence within the service, Hornby attempted on a number of occasions to compel the First Lord to agree to the formation of a naval staff. When invited to join the Admiralty Board in 1874, and again 1876, Hornby conditioned his acceptance with the stipulation that the First Lord would accede to his proposal for an enlarged professional element within the Admiralty. When Ward Hunt declined to accept his terms in 1874, Hornby refused the post, although he would later accept the position of Second Naval Lord at the urging of friends.[3] His conformity to the *status quo* within the Admiralty was short-lived when, upon the retirement of Admiral Alexander Milne in 1876, Hornby refused the post of First Naval Lord under similar circumstances. This time, however, Hornby solicited the support of the two officers he knew were most likely to be offered the post in his place - Admirals Frederick Beauchamp Seymour and Astley Cooper Key.[4] He suggested that the three band together in an attempt to compel Hunt to reconsider his proposal for a naval staff: "[I]f we agree that certain reforms are necessary for the efficiency of the service, and refuse to accept the position of First Sea Lord unless they are carried out, we must carry our point'.[5] Hornby's efforts in this regard were again unsuccessful, as Hunt simply selected the less able Admiral Sir Hastings Yelverton to become First Naval Lord. When the opportunity arose for another attempt for a united front in 1879, Hornby failed to convince the less wealthy and recently re-married Cooper Key, who accepted the post when offered and served in that capacity until 1885.

With Cooper Key now in the Admiralty, Hornby in 1881 was appointed President of the Royal Naval College at Greenwich following the brief stewardship of Admiral Sir Edward Fanshawe.[6] In the meantime, another prominent member of the British defence establishment voiced his support for the formation of a intelligence function within the Admiralty. Captain John Colomb, R.M.A., M.P., the retired Royal Marine Officer and brother of Rear-Admiral Philip Colomb, echoed the importance of an intelligence function in naval matters in a lecture delivered at the

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[2] Hornby to Cooper, 12 October 1876. PHI/120 (a). Cited in N.A.M. Rodger, 'The Dark Ages of the Admiralty, Part II: Change and Decay, (1874-80)', *Mariner's Mirror*, (April 1976), p. 38. See also Mary August Egerton, *Admiral of the Fleet Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, G.C.B.: A Biography*, (Edinburgh 1896), p. 195.

[3] Rodger, p. 35 and Egerton, pp. 183-84 and 198.

[4] Rodger, p. 38.

[5] See Footnote 1 and P.H. Colomb, *Memoirs of Sir Astley Cooper Key*, (London 1898), pp. 412-414.

Royal United Services Institution in 1881.[7] In his support for an 'organized and far-reaching system of naval intelligence', Captain Colomb outlined the classes of information that were crucial to the protection of commerce and the blockade of enemy ports in times of war. According to him, the most important classes of information include 'the naval policies and arrangements of foreign nations as indicated by the war-vessels they build or buy, the material resources, active or dormant, of maritime nations, both as regards construction, refitment, and maintenance'.[8] Colomb also earmarked as vital information 'the principles and details of construction, armament, machinery, appliance, and efficiencies or deficiencies of their warships; all matters relating to the personnel, but active and reserve, of their war navies'.[9] Colomb, however, did not explicitly advocate the expansive scope of this proposed department to include operational planning and other activities in preparation for war.

In March 1882, the argument in favour of a naval intelligence department was bolstered by the findings of the Carnarvon Commission on Colonial Defence. Along with Colomb, the conclusions reached by the commission revived the proposal for a complement of staff officers in the Admiralty. In December of that year, Admiral Sir George Tryon - recently appointed as Secretary of the Admiralty and a close confidant of Admiral Hornby - established the Foreign Intelligence Committee, an *ad hoc* standing group tasked with the collection, analysis and dissemination of the sort of information specified by Colomb in the previous year.[10] The work of the committee was performed under the auspices of the Military, Secret, and Political Branch, which in turn was administered directly by the Secretary of the Admiralty.[11] The hierarchical placement of the committee was highly significant, for the locus of power at the time remained within the office of the Secretary and the dominions to which he provided oversight and direction. The currency of this power flowed generously from the nature of the office itself and the unparalleled access to information afforded to it. The Secretariat in essence was a 'clearing house' for all correspondence received by the Admiralty, and it was here where decisions were made as to the channelling of various reports and letters before reaching the highest levels of the organisation. Major General Sir George Aston, R.M., once referred to the Secretariat as 'the greatest power in the Admiralty for good or for evil' during his tenure as a young staff officer on

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[6] Egerton, pp. 331-337.
[7] For more on the Colomb brothers and their impact on British naval policy, see Donald Schurman, *The Education of a Navy: The Development of British Naval Strategic Thought, 1867-1914*, (London 1965).
[8] Captain J.C.R. Colomb 'Naval Intelligence and Protection of Commerce in War', *RUSI Journal* (1881) p. 555 and 557.
[9] Ibid., p. 557.
[10] For more on this point, see Thomas G. Fergusson, *British Military Intelligence, 1870-1914: The Development of a Modern Intelligence Organization*, (Frederick 1984), pp. 68, 71 & 78-79.
[11] Matthew Allen, 'The Foreign Intelligence Committee and the Origins of the Naval Intelligence Department in the Admiralty', *Mariner's Mirror*, (February 1995), p. 68.

the committee in 1886-1889.[12] 'They wielded great power', continued Aston, 'by the way they presented the briefs to their Lordships, by the turn of the phrases in the letters they drafted to the Fleet and to other Government Offices, [and] by the influence they could exert upon the tone of the replies from other Departments...'.[13]

Tryon also selected Captain William H. Hall to preside over the Committee. Hall, a fellow gunnery officer, once served as an instructor on the Gunnery Training Ship H.M.S. *Excellent* for three years along with Astley Cooper Key, Arthur Hood, John Fisher, Cyprian Bridge and John Knox Laughton, all of whom would voice strong and well-informed opinions on the course of British naval policy at the pinnacle of their careers.[14] During his time onboard H.M.S. *Excellent*, Hall became intimately acquainted with these officers, for the staff on board were few in number and the working conditions were far from spacious.[15] The time together was also significant in terms of his intellectual development, for Hall would have undoubtedly acquired a healthy appreciation for historical awareness from his working relationships with both Laughton and Bridge. Hall in time would become a recognised authority on naval matters at the pinnacle of his own career, while serving as the Director of the newly formed Naval Intelligence Department. In this capacity, he was considered by many to be 'in the van of naval thinkers' - an attribute that itself was molded by the 'wonders of sheer force of *character* and of *knowing*'.[16]

Described as 'intelligent' and 'zealous' by Cooper Key, Hall was known throughout the Admiralty as an excessively energetic staff officer who gained notoriety for what be can be described as an insatiable work ethic.[17] His early death in 1895 at the age of 52 was most likely the result of his outrageous schedule, or what Aston referred to simply as his 'daily routine' of 14-hour working days with no real holiday.[18] During his tenure on both the Foreign Intelligence Committee and its successor, Hall was an ardent advocate of the notion that the navy was indeed the shield of the British Empire. He constantly reminded those under his charge of the underlying objective of the Royal Navy, as defined by the Carnarvon Commission:

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[12] George Aston, *Memories of a Marine: An Amphibiography*, (London 1919) pp. 76-77.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Gunnery was considered the defining specialisation for leadership in the Royal Navy until the Second World War. Key, Hood and Fisher were destined to become First Sea Lords. Bridge would eventually succeed Hall as Director of the Naval Intelligence Department in January 1889. Laughton was the highly regarded naval historian whose writings strongly influenced those in position to effect the development of strategy and doctrine within the Royal Navy. For more on the gunnery specialisation and the H.M.S. *Excellent* during the 1860s, see Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command*, (London 1996); and Andrew Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History: John Knox Laughton, the Royal Navy and the Historical Profession*, (London 1998).
[15] Lambert, p. 23.
[16] Custance to Hornby, 9 January 1888. N[ational] M[aritime] M[useum], PHI/120(c). Emphasis in the original.
[17] *The Times*, 3 February 1888, p. 7.
[18] Aston, p. 83. See also S.M. Eardley-Wilmot, *An Admiral's Memories: Sixty Five Years Afloat and Ashore*, (London 1927), pp. 80-81.

> The Royal Navy is not maintained for the purpose of affording direct local protection to seaports or harbours, but for the object of blockading the ports of an enemy, of destroying his trade, attacking his possessions, dealing with his ships at sea, and, we may add, of preventing an attack in great force against any special place.[19]

To accomplish this task required an intelligence function capable of acquiring timely and valuable information on foreign naval developments. Throughout its existence, however, the Foreign Intelligence Committee was plagued with shortages in staff, with the group consisting only of Hall along with a few naval and Royal Marine officers.[20] With the services of a roaming naval attaché, Hall and his officers were quite successful in acquiring a plethora of information on the naval developments of target countries, most notably France and Russia as both countries were for years viewed sceptically by the Royal Navy to be potential contestants for maritime supremacy.[21] The task for procuring such information was a somewhat easy endeavour due to the courtesy extended to foreign officials in durations of reciprocal transparency. Foreign naval attaches were routinely granted permission to visit naval bases and dockyards, where access to warships either in commission or construction afforded opportunities to assess the relative naval strength of the host country in addition to the progress and quality of its naval construction. These visits were vital to intelligence collection, for the design of the ships, as well as the scale and distribution of the dockyards, were in every way foretelling reflections of the naval policy and ultimately of the national strategy of the host country.[22]

Strategic Preferences in a War with France

Within two years of being appointed to head the intelligence committee, Hall was afforded an exceptional opportunity to make a tightly argued case in favour of the core strategic principles that traditionally guided the Royal Navy in wartime. As the Admiralty was generally unaccustomed to a formal expression of these principles, the planning document Hall submitted to the Admiralty Board in September 1884 was also remarkable by the historical awareness that characterised a new brand of strategic thinking unfamiliar to naval policy circles. What actually spurred Hall to outline a naval campaign against France is unclear, but most likely it stemmed from a series of articles on 'The Truth of the Navy', the first of which appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on 8 September 1884. Written by W.T. Stead, an alarmist journalist and editor of the paper, the articles incited widespread panic over the readiness of British naval capabilities in

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[19] Ibid.
[20] George Aston, *Secret Service*, (London 1930), pp. 20-22.
[21] See Chapter 3 in this thesis for a review of British intelligence assessments of French and Russian naval developments during the 1880s.
[22] These points were also made in the previous chapter.

wartime contingencies, with France featured prominently in his unsubstantiated accusations.[23] '[W]e are just a little ahead of France in ships, behind her in guns and age of our ships', warned Stead.[24] 'Instead of making up lost ground we are losing it...'.[25] With no one better qualified in the Admiralty to consider the opening phases of a future Anglo-French naval war, Hall proceeded with an analysis that combined applied naval history with modern strategic analysis.

From the outset, Hall identified two possible naval strategies to defend Britain against its most troublesome neighbour across the English Channel, both of which possessed a substantive rationale rooted in historical precedent. The first was based primarily upon the doctrines of commerce protection and maritime interdiction, which in contemporary settings would involve British squadrons patrolling vital sea lanes of communication while convoy operations would be reinstituted to protect the merchant marine from attack by enemy commerce raiders.[26] Efforts would also be made to protect dockyard and commercial ports, as well as the foreign coaling-stations and colonial possessions vulnerable to attack by French squadrons.

To follow such a strategy, in the opinion of Hall, would be to submit to a *defensive* policy that would be unfeasible given the scope of the operations required: 'To carry it out would require far more ships than we are ever likely to be able to procure, and so many weak points would still be left, especially in our lines of ocean traffic, that it could not be effective'.[27] But what Hall considered the 'gravest objection' to this policy was his insistence that such a defensive orientation would yield the initiative to France, as 'it would leave the enemy free to employ his fleet as he thought proper, and to fit it out interruptedly what ships he likes'.[28] To do so would represent a radical departure from British strategic culture, and Hall made it perfectly clear in his report to the First Naval Lord that 'a *defensive* policy....is utterly at variance with the traditions of the British navy, whose role has always been that of *attack*, and not *defence*'.[29] Thus, the only available recourse was to adhere to the strategic traditions of the Royal Navy, conducting offensive operations designed to accomplish three primary objectives: (1) to seek out and capture all enemy warships on deployment at the onset of hostilities; (2) to blockade aggressively the

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[23] For more on the impact of the Stead affair, see John F. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era, 1866-1880*, (Palo Alto 1997), pp. 265-268; and Ruddock F. Mackay, *Fisher of Kilverstone*, (Oxford 1973), pp. 179-181.

[24] 'The Truth About the Navy', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 8 September 1884. Cited in John Henry Briggs, *Naval Administrations, 1827-1892: The Experience of 65 Years*, (London 1897), pp. 216-217.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Convoy operations had been discontinued by the Royal Navy by 1879 because they were becoming both 'wasteful' and 'inconvenient' in the face of the threat posed by a handful of steam cruisers. See Andrew D. Lambert, 'The Royal Navy, 1856-1914: Deterrence and The Strategy of World Power' in Keith Neilson and Elizabeth J. Errington, (eds), *Navies and Global Defense: Theories and Strategy*, (Westport 1996), p. 29.

[27] F.I.C. Report No. 51, 'Remarks on a Naval Campaign'. ADM 231/5.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

ports of the enemy so that its warships cannot provide an adequate and effective defence; and (3) to seek the reduction of enemy coaling stations, commercial ports, as well as its naval bases and dockyards, through naval bombardment. Such an offensive posture would retain the initiative for the British while denying it to the enemy. In the words of Hall: 'Another strong reason in favour of an *offensive* policy is that if *promptly* carried out, by striking simultaneously at several vulnerable points on the French coast and in the French possessions abroad....the attention of the enemy would be directed from the attack of *our* vulnerable points to the defence of its own'.[30]

With these objectives in mind, Hall surmised correctly that the fleet could not possibly secure them all at the same time: 'But the question naturally arises, if our present resources are unequal to the execution of *all* these operations *simultaneously*, could not the operations be taken in succession, or, if not, what is our fleet capable of accomplishing?'.[31] He then set out to answer this question by prioritising core strategic imperatives in a war with France. Of paramount concern was the attack and destruction of all enemy ships abroad:

> The operation which I place first is the attack of the ships in commission. This I consider to be the most important of all. The ships are distributed on the several stations in close proximity not only to our own war-vessels but our commerce, and frequently to our possessions, are always ready for action, and by a flash of the telegraph can be converted into *active* enemies and started off to harass our commerce and possessions. Their prompt capture is therefore of the most vital importance.[32]

Next on his list was the attack of French coaling-stations, home dockyards and commercial ports in succession. He advocated the immediate bombardment of the French naval bases at Cherbourg and Brest, to be conducted by a squadron of armourclads suitable for offensive coastal operations. In the meantime, armourclads in reserve at home would supplement the Mediterranean squadron to 'watch' the French naval base at Toulon. Efforts to 'watch' both Brest and Cherbourg were also perceived as necessary by Hall.

In watching these French naval bases, Hall expected British naval squadrons to perform a less aggressive form of blockade. No provision was made for the 'close' blockade of these ports in the traditional sense of the term. Referring again to the lessons of naval history, Hall doubted whether the close blockade would achieve the immediate and decisive results: 'The chief work in which the bulk of our line-of-battle ships were employed in the last war with France, viz, the blockade of the enemy's ships in his home ports, is, however, considered to be an impossible, or, at all events, a most dangerous endeavour at the present time...'.[33] Thus, with full appreciation of the hardships likely to be encountered when conducting protracted naval operations off the

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[30] Ibid. Emphases in the original. The vulnerable points referred to by Hall include British commerce, foreign coaling-stations and depots, and its own commercial ports and naval home arsenals.
[31] Ibid. Emphases in the original.
[32] Ibid.

enemy's coastline, Hall was extremely confident of British naval capabilities and the naval campaign that would ultimately ensure British maritime supremacy. Although he doubted the efficacy of the close blockade, and substituted instead a naval campaign conceived with offensive coastal operations in mind, the contents of his analysis indicate strongly that Hall was firmly committed to the strategic traditions of the service while remaining perceptive of the operational realities of modern naval warfare.

Strategic Preferences in a War with Russia

Hall would submit a similar planning document to the Admiralty Board in the following year, at the height of Anglo-Russian tensions in March 1885 over a boundary dispute in Afghanistan.[34] The report reiterated many of the points made in his planning against France in the prior year. He assumed correctly that the Imperial Russian Navy, still in a state of infancy relative to the Royal Navy, would be impelled to target British commerce as the only viable means to avoid defeat. Indeed, a pamphlet obtained in the following month by a British consulate official only confirmed what was anticipated by Hall in a future war with Russia. Written by a senior naval officer, the Russians envisioned success with their own version of the *guerre de course*: 'Only to prevent this free exchange [of commerce] for a short time and such complications will arise as are little dreamed of and therefore everything must be done to paralyse sea-borne trade. Thirty good cruisers...will be more terrible to England than the armed armada of the civilized world'.[35] The problem with such a naval strategy, however, was the fact that the Imperial Russian Navy simply lacked the capabilities and resources to pursue a *guerre de course* in a manner that would actually constitute a genuine threat to those concerned in the Admiralty.

As was the case with France, Hall again declined to support a defensive naval strategy that revolved around commerce protection, for such a plan 'means the attempt to protect 92,000 miles of waterway communications'.[36] In a subsequent report most certainly written by Hall and submitted to the Admiralty in May 1885, the intelligence department cautioned that 'no system of patrolling the ocean highways can of itself secure protection to our commerce...'.[37] At the same time, however, Hall and his staff discounted the actual threat posed by Russian "fast" cruisers and the *guerre de course*: 'It is assumed that the class of vessel with which Russia will probably assail our commerce, more particularly our steam trade, on the high seas, is not the low speed and

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[33] Ibid.
[34] M.A. Yapp, 'British Perceptions of the Russian Threat to India', *Modern Asian Studies*, (December 1987), pp. 647-665
[35] Foreign Office to Admiralty, 25 June 1888, ADM 1/6934.
[36] F.I.C. Report No. 64, 'General Outline of Possible Naval Operations Against Russia'. ADM 231/6.
[37] F.I.C. Report No. 73, 'The Protection of Commerce By Patrolling the Ocean Highways and By Convoy'. ADM 231/6.

small coal capacity war-cruizer, but the long steam-cruizing armed merchant-steamer of *good*, but not necessarily very high speed'.[38]

Predictably, Hall advocated an offensive naval strategy that, 'besides being in keeping with the *traditions* of the British navy, is easier to accomplish than the other, and more likely to secure efficient protection to our commerce'.[39] Due to the rather impressive defensive schemes existing at both Cronstadt and Sweaborg, however, he thought it advisable not to undertake coastal operations to reduce these 'impregnable' naval bases by means of naval bombardment. Conditions were instead favourable for the deployment of a powerful squadron that would proceed and remain on station at the entrance of the Gulf of Finland. The primary objective of this squadron was to effect a 'close watch' of Russian warships while a smaller squadron would be employed to hunt, capture or destroy those ships that managed to elude the blockading squadron. In the final analysis, Hall was very confidant that such a strategy would ultimately prove successful in retaining maritime supremacy: 'I think we may fairly assume that our fleet should be able to lock up in port the ships of the Russian war navy and her mercantile marine, and to prevent those that may be awry from her ports when war is declared from materially injuring our commerce'.[40] Accorded with the strategic flexibility of a first-rate naval power, Hall formulated a war plan against Russia that reflected the circumstances before him, which he was able to do because the Royal Navy had become quite adept over the years of switching between the doctrines of blockade and coastal bombardment. Assessing the situation correctly, he deemed the former to be more preferable in light of the impressive fortifications at Cronstadt and the relative disparity in naval strength between the two countries. Thus, while the naval campaign set out for Russia differed from that prescribed for France in 1884, Hall again articulated a clear preference for an offensive naval strategy that was consistent with strategic ideas shared by his fellow officers in the Royal Navy.

THE POLITICS OF STRATEGIC THINKING AND THE FORMATION OF THE INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT

In the aftermath of the Penjdeh Crisis, also known in exaggerated terms as the 'Russian Naval Scare of 1885', concern within the Admiralty was voiced over the level of preparations in anticipation of naval operations against the Imperial Russian Navy. No voice was louder than that of Captain Lord Charles Beresford, the outspoken Junior Naval Lord who quickly became the self-appointed patron of the Foreign Intelligence Committee. Motivated by the absence of any contingency plan for naval mobilisation in the event of war, Beresford penned a memorandum in October 1886 that outlined a scheme whereby the Committee would be transformed into a formal

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[38] Ibid. Emphasis in the original.
[39] F.I.C. Report No. 64.
[40] Ibid.

department tasked with the formulation of mobilisation plans in addition to the collection, analysis and dissemination of foreign naval intelligence. Never at a loss for words, Beresford 'emphatically' and 'distinctly' warned his colleagues on the Admiralty Board of the consequences of inaction in this matter, noting that 'the greatest state of affairs would occur in this country if war was declared with a first-rate Maritime Power, simply through want of organization, forethought, and ordinary common sense, which would be simply ludicrous if not so perilous'.[41]

In writing such a provocative memorandum, Beresford was painfully aware that the politics of the Admiralty Board were not in his favour. The First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord George Hamilton, was a career politician whose administrative *ethos* emphasised fiscal restraint and, in particular, the efficacy of policy reform in an incremental fashion. His first task upon assuming office in June 1885 was to replace the current Board of Admiralty with senior officers who were quite amenable to his philosophy[42], and those who were selected quickly embraced his strongly held view that 'the resuscitation of a navy under present conditions must be a slow and laborious process'.[43] Perhaps the most significant of Hamilton's selections was his choice for First Naval Lord. Admiral Sir Arthur Hood was the perfect candidate to serve Hamilton in this capacity, for he undoubtedly embodied the qualities Hamilton was searching for in the senior officer who would become his chief naval advisor.[44] Sir John Knox Laughton, who served with Hood onboard H.M.S. *Excellent* for a number of years, believed him to be 'a careful, painstaking officer, without the genius that was much needed in a period of great change, and clinging by temperament to the ideas of the past, when they ceased to be suitable'.[45] Hood was certainly a proponent of incrementalism when it came to the matters of naval policy, and he simply lacked the imagination and intellectual framework to support innovation on his own initiative. 'The four years which followed [his appointment] were years of great change and advance", continued Laughton, 'but it was commonly supposed that Hood's efforts were mainly devoted to preventing the advance from becoming too rapid'.[46]

Hamilton complemented the selection of Hood with the appointment of Vice-Admirals Sir Anthony Hoskins and William Graham as Second and Third Naval Lord respectively. In these capacities both officers aligned themselves with the naval reforms prescribed by their patron, for it was Hamilton who was directly responsible for their generous salaries, housing and the stature

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[41] Admiralty & Secretariat Cases, 'Reorganisation of the Foreign Intelligence Committee (Now the Naval Intelligence Department)'. ADM 116/3106. See also Allen, pp. 65-78.
[42] Lord George Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections, 1868-1885*, (London 1916), pp. 290-291.
[43] *The Times*, 7 May 1888, p. 12.
[44] Hamilton, p. 292.
[45] Sidney Lee, (ed), *The Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume II, (London 1912), p. 293. Entry written by John Knox Laughton.
[46] Ibid.

normally accorded to a member of the Board of Admiralty.[47] All were more than suitable to Hamilton, that is with the notable exception of Beresford. It was abundantly clear to him that Beresford was cut from a very different fabric. 'Though a very gallant and capable officer afloat', Hamilton complained, 'Beresford is not suitable to administrative work. His want of reticence and self-restraint makes him difficult as a colleague, and almost impossible as a subordinate. I have had much trouble with him...'.[48] Despite serious misgivings about his former childhood classmate, however, Beresford's appointment to the Board was made in the middle of 1886 through Lord Salisbury and at the behest of the Prince of Wales, both of whom viewed Beresford more as a political asset than a future liability. Upon his startling resignation from the Admiralty Board in January 1888, Salisbury would later report to Queen Victoria that Beresford 'was an officer of great ability afloat, but he too is greedy of popular applause to get on in a public department. He is constantly playing his own game at the expense of his colleagues in the Department, which causes much irritation'.[49]

Unlike the situation faced by his colleagues, Beresford was an officer of independent income and an influential member of Parliament. He was therefore inclined to offer opinions that differed from his superiors, and his actions to motivate them into action over the intelligence matter provides yet another example of the striking dissimilarities in his disposition and that Hood and Hamilton. Unwilling to await definitive action by the Board, Beresford prematurely leaked his memorandum to the press, which was first published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on 13 October 1886.[50] Ironically, Hood was already considering his own proposal for a limited expansion of the intelligence function to include some oversight over the problem of mobilisation. As expected, he wanted to study the matter further, but was overruled by the First Lord who, as a politician, was incensed over the leak of Beresford's memorandum while acutely sensitive to the reaction stemming from its publication.[51] Hamilton immediately ordered a preliminary report to be furnished within a month, and the task to justify the expansion of the intelligence function was left to Hall, who happened to be the least objective naval officer when it came to matters of intelligence.

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[47] *Parliamentary Papers*, Select Committee on Navy Estimates (1888), First Report. The First and Third Naval Lords - the latter being the Controller of the Navy - both received £1,500 per annum with a house. The Second Naval Lord earned £1,200 per annum with a house, while the Junior Naval Lord received £1,000 per annum with a house. These salaries - despite the house were quite exceptional during this period. On the First Lord's opinion of Hoskins and Graham, see Lord George Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections, 1886-1906*, (London 1922), p. 87.

[48] Hamilton to Posonby, 1 January 1888. Cited in Geoffrey Bennett, *Charlie B: A Biography of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford*, (London 1968) p. 145. See also Hamilton, pp. 93-94.

[49] Salisbury to Queen Victoria, 19 January 1888. CAB 41/21/1.

[50] Allen, p. 72.

[51] Ibid.

As requested, Hall submitted his interim report on 4 November 1886, in which he predictably advocated the creation of an enlarged intelligence department with a broad mandate that included responsibility for mobilisation and foreign naval intelligence.[52] Of particular significance was his explicit request that strategy development be included within his portfolio. According to Hall, the preparations for war could only be considered complete when and if the intelligence function was afforded responsibility for 'the consideration of the naval strategical operations that could be necessary in certain probable contingencies and the consequent distribution of the naval forces of the country'.[53] Hall was even more specific in his request:

> I would only submit that the question of naval strategical operations should be one of the subjects to be dealt with by the Intelligence Department; their duty in this respect being limited to laying before the Senior Naval Lord in the most convenient form, all the information required by him for the preparation of a plan of campaign, which preliminary work, judging from my experience of the Russian fear, it is at present nobody's business to undertake.[54]

Upon reading the report, Hamilton and Hood were quite impressed with the industry and ability of Hall, with the latter recommending that his former protégé on H.M.S. *Excellent* be retained to head the new department for his 'experience' and 'knowledge of various subjects'.[55] For his part, Hall was not overly enthusiastic about spending yet another two years in the Admiralty. While he clearly recognised the importance of his position and its potential impact on naval policy formulation, he was adamant that the functions of the department would be best served under the leadership of a senior officer. Hall was still a junior Captain, having been promoted to the rank only weeks after his appointment to the Foreign Intelligence Committee in December 1882.[56] In later years he complained bitterly to Admiral Hornby, observing that 'placing a *junior* officer at the Head of such a Department would excite unpleasant feelings' which could only be used 'as an argument to deny its importance which is what has happened'.[57] Hall also made reference to the presence of a venerable opposition that was concerned that his department might 'usurp the functions and authority of the Board'.[58] Finally, Hall beseeched Hornby to use his considerable influence within the service and his stature as a public figure to assist in his endeavours to ensure 'that the work we have been ardently been doing for the last twelve months may, under an officer of greater experience and more influence, develop into what may be as useful to the navy as is the work of the German Staff to their Army'.[59]

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[52] Hall to Admiralty, 'Preliminary Report on Proposals Made With the Organization for War', November 1886. ADM 1/6820(a).
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Admiralty & Secretariat Cases, 'Reorganisation of the Foreign Intelligence Committee (Now the Naval Intelligence Department)'. ADM 116/3106.
[56] Allen, p. 68.
[57] Hall to Hornby, 9 January 1888. N. M. M., PHI/120(c). Emphasis in the original.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.

If Hall desired the power and influence traditionally wielded by the German Chief of Staff, the broad and far-reaching mandate extended to his department provided him with what can only be described as a *de facto* staff system. His instructions from the Admiralty Board reveal the extent to which Hall was capable of shaping the course of Admiralty policy:

> 1. To collect, sift, record, and lay before the board all the information relating to maritime matters likely to be of use in war.
> 2. To prepare and keep correct to date, a complete plan for mobilising the Naval forces of the Empire with the utmost possible rapidity, and with the least strain on the Admiralty.
> 3. When directed, to prepare plans of Naval Campaign, for the consideration of the Board.
> 4. To bring to the notice of the Board all points affecting "Preparation for War", but it is to be distinctly understood that the Intelligence Department is not to indicate to the Board any policy in connection with shipbuilding, armaments, &c., unless called upon to do so.[60]

Hall was also afforded direct access to the Senior Naval Lord, and he reported only to the other members of the Board when circumstances required him to do so. His proximity to the locus of power was also enhanced significantly when the Transport Department was relieved of its coveted office space within the Admiralty building, as 'it was considered desirable that the Intelligence Department be as close as possible to the Board'.[61] With such a broad mandate and liberal access to the Admiralty Board, Hall certainly had his fingers on the strategic pulse of the Royal Navy.

BUREAUCRATIC OPPOSITION TO THE INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT

Work in the newly formulated department was officially commenced on 1 February 1887. Under the watchful direction of Captain Hall, it was conducted by an augmented staff that was in turn divided into two discrete sections for mobilisation and intelligence. Captains Reginald N. Custance and J. Eardley-Wilmot were appointed as assistant directors to supervise the work performed in their respective areas of responsibility. Both officers were highly regarded in the Admiralty, not only for their performances in their official capacities, but also for their profound interest in naval strategy and ship design.[62] Custance busied himself mainly with matters of personnel and logistics.[63] Of specific concern to him was the coaling of naval squadrons in time of war, a favourite topic of Beresford during his tenure on the Admiralty Board.[64] Custance solicited the views of other department heads (i.e., Departments of Transport and Contracts) and endeavoured to formulate a coherent policy on the fitting and employment of colliers in

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[60] N[aval] I[ntelligence] D[epartment], 'Report on the Work of the Naval Intelligence Department During the Year 1887', February 1888. ADM 231/12.
[61] Ibid.
[62] It will be recalled from Chapter 3 – Footnote 132 - that both officers served on the executive council of the RUSI during their tenures in the Naval Intelligence Department.
[63] Allen, p. 73.
[64] Bennett, p. 143.

protracted naval operations in foreign waters.[65] The feasibility of this policy was continually assessed in the annual naval manoeuvres conducted under the auspices of the department. While the Admiralty Board developed the program to be followed in the manoeuvres, it was up to Custance and his staff to provide administrative oversight for the fleet exercises, including the compilation of reports from the umpires and participants.[66]

Eardley-Wilmot and his intelligence section, meanwhile, were tasked with the collection, analysis and dissemination of information related to foreign naval developments. On the main, the activities of this section depended on the reports of the roaming naval attaché, who in turn received instructions from the Senior Naval Lord after consulting with Captain Hall.[67] During this period, Captains Henry Kane and Sir W. Cecil Domville served the Admiralty in this capacity. Receiving their official instructions through the Foreign Office, the naval attachés frequently visited the naval dockyards and facilities in Germany, Italy, Spain, Russia and France. It was the naval developments of the latter two countries that attracted most of their attention, for both France and Russia were investing heavily in the modernisation of their fleets along defensive orientations. The reports forwarded to London were meant to provide accurate representations of the rate of modernisation, including qualitative details of French and Russian naval programs that were most revealing. As amply demonstrated by their handwritten notations, both Hamilton and Hood were avid readers of these reports, and their contents served only to discount the widely accepted notion that the countries were pursuing ambitious shipbuilding programs that would eventually render the warships of the Royal Navy inferior, both in terms of quality and quantity. Based on the information gleaned from the intelligence reports, Hamilton was strongly encouraged to continue his efforts to limit naval expenditures for political purposes, and to ensure that the Navy was placed within the 'compass of finance'.[68]

Yet despite the apparent usefulness of the new department, the activities of Hall and his staff were immediately viewed with great suspicion by some members of the Admiralty Board, who were quite concerned that the new department would somehow usurp the assigned duties of the four Naval Lords. What complicated matters further was an inequitable division of labour and the overwhelming burden of administration in the absence of a formalised staff function. Unwilling to delegate these matters to the new intelligence department, the distribution of duties among the Board was seriously out of balance, with Hood as First Naval Lord assuming an oppressive

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[65] N.I.D to Admiralty Board, 9 May 1887. ADM 1/6869. The attached report was entitled 'Certain Questions Related to Colliers' and was written by Custance and Hall.
[66] See, for example, N.I.D. Report No. 179, 'Report on the Naval Manoeuvres of 1888', October 1888. ADM 231/14.
[67] N.I.D. to Admiralty Board, 'Relations of Naval Attaches with the Naval Intelligence Department', 6 February 1889. ADM 1/6970. This office memorandum was an update to one issued in February 1883.
[68] *The Times*, 4 February 1888, p. 12.

portfolio that included an inordinate amount of attention given to the daily operations of the fleet in peacetime.[69] Serving as Third Naval Lord and the Controller of the Navy, Vice-Admiral Graham was equally challenged with the excessive demands for his time from the various departments within his purview, which included the more vital departments of Ordnance and Construction. Fortunately for Graham, these departments were in the capable hands of Captain John Fisher and Sir William White respectively.[70] Meanwhile, the portfolios of the Second and Fourth Naval Lords were extremely limited, so much so that Beresford once described the duties of Admiral Hoskins as 'frivolous'.[71] Interestingly, both Beresford and Hoskins clearly recognised the intrinsic value of the intelligence department. At one point, Beresford even suggested that 'the principle which is now adopted with reference to the Naval Intelligence Department could be usefully extended, so as to have in that department an officer who would act as a staff officer to each of the Naval Lords'.[72] Hoskins was equally confident that the officers of the expanded department 'would insure the continuity of principle and policy, which is now entirely or largely broken when a naval officer goes out of office'.[73] Had such a suggestion been approved by Hamilton for implementation, the First Lord would have done much to remove the administrative albatross that served only to impede strategic and force planning in the Admiralty.

In the end, however, the willingness to expand the intelligence department was not shared by Hamilton or Hood, who simply thought it unnecessary to pursue such an option when the highly centralised system currently in place was more than adequate to accomplish the tasks at hand. Instead, both men concurred with a proposal from the Treasury in August 1887 to reduce the provisional salaries of those officers working in the department so as to limit further expenditure by the Admiralty. This was in part expected by Captains Hall and Custance, the latter confiding to Admiral Hornby in January 1888 that '[Hall] has been aware for a long time that he has not sufficient standing to hold his own. The strongest proof of this being that his pay has been cut down. Fancy the pay of D.N.I. being less than that of D.N.O. or Director of Transports. This is equivalent to saying that the whole is *less* than its part.'[74] From his perspective, Beresford thought such a decision to be counterproductive, especially since he believed strongly that 'the efficiency of the whole service was...bound up with the efficiency of the Intelligence Department; because that department was created for the express purpose of estimating and reporting what was required to fulfil its duties'.[75] On 9 January 1888, Beresford surprised his colleagues by resigning

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[69] This point was underscored in Briggs, pp. 241-242.
[70] Mackay, p. 188.
[71] Quoted in Bennett, p. 149.
[72] *Parliamentary Papers*, Select Committee on Navy Estimates (1888), First Report.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Custance to Hornby, 9 January 1888. PHI/120(c).
[75] Lord Charles Beresford, *The Memoirs of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford*, (London 1914) p. 353.

his position on the Admiralty Board in protest over what he believed to be an arbitrary decision to limit the functions of the Naval Intelligence Department..

At the time, Beresford's resignation appeared to be in vain, for he was the only senior officer within the Admiralty in a position to remedy what can only be described as a form of policy inertia that extended to strategic and force planning. Without an expanded intelligence function or a formalised staff system, 'the volume of business accumulating for managerial decision was so great that board members, often including the first sea lord, became so preoccupied with routine administration that strategic policy became a peripheral concern'.[76] The Admiralty Board thus fell victim to the 'decoupling' of strategy and structure, where 'formulating strategy and planning for the future become quite marginal'.[77] The fact that these activities were marginalised under the current system of naval administration was underscored by Hamilton himself. When asked if the tenets of British naval strategy were actually considered by the Admiralty Board when discussing future shipbuilding requirements, Hamilton simply proclaimed that 'it is hardly advisable that I should go into a question of that kind. It is a complicated question of naval strategy, and that would not, of course be discussed at a shipbuilding Board'.[78] The decoupling of strategy and structure was also apparent in the budget-driven process by which the First Lord and the Admiralty Board determined the shipbuilding requirements submitted to Parliament for consideration in March 1888. The results obtained from this process were quite the opposite of the conclusions made in a force planning analysis prepared by Captain Hall and submitted to Hood and Hamilton in December 1887.

STRATEGIC THINKING AND ADMIRALTY DIFFERENCES OVER FORCE PLANNING

There are a number of approaches and techniques available to devise a force structure that can accomplish the strategic objectives of a military organisation. It is an arduous and highly complicated process even when performed by the most developed military organisation, but it is often made easier by a number of filter approaches that serve to reduce extraneous variables from force planning considerations.[79] Both the Admiralty Board and the Naval Intelligence Department in 1887 adopted approaches and analytical techniques to arrive at shipbuilding estimates that varied significantly, both in terms of the types and quantities of warships proposed for construction. How these estimates could be so different is of particular relevance to the origins of the Naval Defence Act of 1889.

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[76] Christopher Dandeker, 'Bureaucracy Planning and War: The Royal Navy, 1880-1918', *Armed Forces & Society*, (Fall 1984), p. 136.
[77] Ibid., p. 131.
[78] *Parliamentary Papers*, Select Committee on Navy Estimates (1888), Fourth Report.

Finance as the Final Arbiter of Naval Policy

Consistent with the administrative *ethos* of Lord George Hamilton, the Admiralty Board adopted the fiscal, or budget-driven approach to force planning. What makes this approach particularly attractive, even in contemporary settings, is its fiscal conservatism, as strategic and force structure choices are made in light of expected budgetary allocations and other constraints upon government spending. When combined with other approaches, the budget-driven emphasis is extremely useful as it provides a measure of fiscal discipline in the force planning process. Outcomes of policy deliberations are often reflective of service priorities that are both realistic and attainable given previous and expected levels of government spending on national defence. Yet when used by itself, a budget-driven emphasis can seriously decouple strategy and structure, as decisions based solely upon financial concerns are made irrespective to the effectiveness of current force structures to accomplish the objectives of a national security strategy. Operational success at the service level is thus endangered by a general failure to design a force structure that is indicative of the roles and missions of the service in wartime.

It was these drawbacks to the budget-driven approach that were evident in the force planning process established by the politicians in the Admiralty. It began in the summer of 1887, when Hood and Graham first met with Hamilton to discuss the basis from which they should frame their shipbuilding requirements for the forthcoming fiscal year.[80] Having already received his planning guidance from the Cabinet, Hamilton informed both Hood and Graham that the requirements should be framed in accordance to the level of shipbuilding expenditures in the prior year. From a strictly financial basis, both Hood and Graham then endeavoured to devise a construction program that was seen as 'the best way of expending that sum of money to meet the requirements of the service'.[81] At no point in time, however, had either of them been asked to provide an alternative scheme that took into consideration the strategic objectives of the service, while at the same time independent from the fiscal constraints imposed by the Cabinet. The absence of such a scheme was so significant in fact that Admiral Sir Richard Vesey Hamilton - the successor to Hood as First Naval Lord - would later concede publicly that 'no complete scheme, showing what were the naval requirements of the country, had been laid before the Board, apart from the financial limits laid down by the Cabinet, at any time within the knowledge of those most conversant with Admiralty affairs'.[82] The outcome of this skewed process was a shipbuilding programme that failed to fulfil the shipbuilding requirements of the Royal Navy, especially when taking into

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[79] For a summary of the various approaches to force planning, see Henry C. Bartlett, G. Paul Holman, and Timothy E. Somes, 'The Art of Strategy and Force Planning', *Naval War College Review*, (Spring 1995), pp. 144-146.

[80] *Parliamentary Papers*, Select Committee on Navy Estimates (1888), Fourth Report.

[81] Ibid.

account the strategic doctrines of close blockade and offensive coastal operations in a multiple threat environment.

The Impact of Strategic Thinking upon Force Planning

As noted above, Captain Hall and his staff were afforded a broad mandate in areas where strategic thinking had a decisive impact upon British naval administration, namely foreign intelligence, fleet mobilisation, and strategy development. One area beyond the scope of this mandate was the force planning function, the duties of which were traditionally the domain of the First Naval Lord and the Admiralty Board. In December 1887, however, Hall prepared a report that assessed the comparative naval strength of Britain, France and Russia. The first draft of the report was subsequently revised and submitted to the Admiralty in May 1888, at the height of intense scrutiny over the resources and capabilities of the Royal Navy. To classify this report as another planning document would be understatement, as the conclusions reached by Hall departed significantly from those made by his superiors in the force planning exercise outlined above. Using a worst-case scenario to highlight a strategic problem, the D.N.I. concluded that the Royal Navy - deficient in both battleships and cruisers - would be severely handicapped in a future maritime contest with France and Russia, the only two countries that in combination could pose a challenge to British for command of the seas, particularly in the Mediterranean. His analysis revealed a deficiency of 13 battleships, 38 cruisers and 32 torpedo vessels, all of which would be required to maintain a close blockade of enemy ports while providing an ample reserve squadron to be deployed in the English Channel.[83] In contrast, the Admiralty Board was quite content with the addition of a limited number of cruisers, gunboats and torpedo-gunboats, the cost of which was estimated at £2,667,000. No provision was made for the construction of battleships.

In applying his brand of strategic thinking to solve this strategic problem, Hall advocated a direct linkage between strategy and structure in force planning initiatives. Not coincidentally, his analysis was again based on the core strategic principles that he believed would be used to guide the Royal Navy in wartime, with a particular emphasis upon the strategic doctrine of close blockade: 'History teaches us that this policy was uniformly successful in preventing invasion, that it afforded good security to our commerce, and that by its adoption were able to hold our own against the united fleets of the three greatest maritime nations of the time. It is recorded that when blockade was rigorously enforced, it effectually prevented the escape of any *war* vessels'.[84] The effectiveness of this doctrine was of course predicated on the presence of sufficient numbers of battleships and cruisers to conduct blockading operations against both countries in multiple

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[82] Richard Vesey Hamilton, *Naval Administration*, (London 1896) p. 167.
[83] N.I.D. Report No. 149a, 'Comparison of the Fleets of England, France and Russia in 1890', May 1888. ADM 231/12.

theatres of action. For such a strategy to be effected with any measure of success, Hall surmised that the Royal Navy would require a force level far superior to that harboured in the French ports of Toulon, Brest and Cherbourg. The numerical challenge posed by the French navy was relatively insignificant by itself, but was further magnified by the necessity for replenishment operations, the absence of a reserve squadron in home waters, and the contingency for operations to prevent the egress of Russian warships operating from ports in the Baltic and Black Seas.[85] The report prepared by the D.N.I., in short, demonstrated that British naval capabilities would be overwhelmed by the scope of operations required to fulfil the roles and missions prescribed by the strategic traditions of the service.

This is not to say, however, that Hall was completely objective in his analysis, an attribute which may have stemmed from a desire to avoid mitigating factors. For instance, Hall blindly assumed that Britain would be forced to fight without allies in a war with both France and Russia. Such an eventuality was highly improbable, for Italy was most interested in concluding a naval alliance to protect herself against a threat of the French navy in the Mediterranean.[86] It possessed a sizeable and well-trained navy, one that could supplement British blockading operations off Toulon, thereby allowing the Royal Navy to concentrate its forces elsewhere if needed. Hall also failed to consider the qualitative differences between the Royal Navy and its hypothetical adversaries. On this point, Hall received criticism from Sir William White, the Director of Naval Construction who received the report only as a courtesy to ensure the accuracy of the ship specifications contained therein. 'Although the papers do not come to me for purposes of criticism', White protested, 'I cannot allow them to pass without an expression of my strong dissent from some of the assumptions made in this Comparison'.[87] White was by no means an opponent of additional naval construction, but he did object to what he thought was an exercise in creative statistics. He considered Hall's analysis to be misleading in some respects, including his comparison of French and British battleships: 'Nearly all the French battleships classed as second and third class have *wood hulls*. Three years hence, 15 to 21 years will have elapsed since they were launched. To reckon all of these ships as available for battle - presumably at sea - is in my opinion not reasonable'.[88] White also brought attention to the fact that Hall failed to include

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[84] Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

[85] Hall concluded that the number of battleships required to blockade a given number of vessels was equivalent to $a + 1/4a + b$, where a represents the number of enemy battleships inside and b represents the number of blockaders always absent coaling. Similarly, the number of cruisers needed was equivalent to $a + 1/3a + c + d$, where a represents the number of enemy cruisers in port, c represents the number of blockaders always absent coaling, and d represents the number required as dispatch vessels between the blockading squadron and its base.

[86] Foreign Office to Admiralty, 'Italy and Her Alliances', December 1888. ADM 1/6935. See also C.J. Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean*, (London 1965).

[87] Hall to Admiralty, 'Proofs of the Comparison of the Fleets of England, France and Russia', November 1887. ADM 1/6873.

[88] Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

British warships that would be available for service within the specified timeframe, noting that 'It is clearly wrong to exclude the 22 vessels to be laid down here in 1888, all of which will be ready by the end of 1890; while including vessels on the French side which are still in the earliest stages of construction...'.[89] Finally, and most importantly, White took exception to the absence of certain qualitative factors that rendered British vessels superior to those possessed by the French: 'Comparisons of *numbers* of ships are valuable. But these comparisons do not take into account of the important fact that for twelve or fourteen years we have been building vessels with *protective decks*, whereas the French are only now developing the class. This adds enormously to the relative value of our force....'.[90]

Admiral Hood concurred with this assessment, and instructed Captain Hall to revise the report to account for the criticisms forwarded by White and those from the First Naval Lord himself. In the end, however, the final version submitted in May 1888 included only slightly modified tables and a lightly worded reference to the qualitative differences between British and French warships. In so doing Hall provided an innovative force planning model that was eventually adopted by the politicians after suppressing it for months, following which Lord George Hamilton conceded and instructed Hood in July 1888 'to state the amount of force which would be required under certain eventualities'.[91] The result was a revised shipbuilding program that was eventually authorised by the Naval Defence Act of 1889.[92] It was thus no coincidence that Admiralty estimates in shipbuilding differed only slightly from those proposed by Captain Hall and the Naval Intelligence Department.

CONCLUSION

The naval career of W.H. Hall has largely been overlooked by naval historians to date, due mainly to the fact that he had the audacity to die before he could reach flag rank and write his memoirs. Without the benefit of personal papers, what is known of him and his tenure at the Admiralty can only be pieced together through personal recollections and correspondence, supplemented by occasional references to him by the biographers of Fisher and Beresford. While this is clearly an unfortunate circumstance, the volumes of intelligence reports and estimates produced during his six-year tenure as the first D.N.I. serve as ample testimonials to a posthumous recognition as both strategic thinker and service intellectual.

Even though his naval career was generally unremarkable until he was posted to the Admiralty in 1882, Hall contributed widely to Admiralty policy at a time when the Admiralty Board was

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[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid. Emphasis in the original.
[91] Hamilton to Cabinet Office, 'Navy Estimates 1889-90', November 1888. CAB 37/21/24
[92] Admiralty to Cabinet Office, 'The Requirements of the British Navy', July 1888. CAB 37/22/36.

preoccupied with financial reform and very much indifferent to the matters of strategy. To compensate for this, Hall sought to instil a new brand of strategic thinking within the Admiralty that touched upon the most critical aspects of naval administration, particularly in the areas of strategic and force planning. The planning documents written by him, especially the innovative force planning model outlined above, also reflect his respect for the strategic ideas preponderant among naval officers and an enthusiasm to institutionalise them within the policy frameworks that prevailed in the Admiralty. This was no doubt fostered by the revival of these ideas through the formalised study of naval history pioneered by John Knox Laughton, whose interest in the subject, not ironically, began to emerge during the three years Hall and Laughton served together onboard H.M.S. *Excellent*. That Hall was eventually succeeded in January 1889 by Laughton's closest friend and fellow service intellectual - Captain Cyprian A.G. Bridge - speaks volumes for the intellectual standard established by Hall and expected of his successors, who included Bridge, Battenberg, Custance, Slade, Ottley, and his son Reginald 'Blinker' Hall. All of these men would later achieve flag rank, no doubt in recognition of their service as directors of naval intelligence. Had Captain Hall not succumbed at such a critical stage in his career, there is little doubt that he would have reached flag rank and distinguished himself in the Fisher era of British naval policy.

What Captain Hall could not accomplish during his tenure at the Admiralty, however, was to overcome the bureaucratic opposition to his new department, particularly from his superiors on the Admiralty Board. He confided to Admiral Hornby in January 1888 that the credibility of his department was being seriously undermined by his junior status, and hoped that a flag officer would be appointed to succeed him.[93] That his reports flowed directly to Admiral Hood and Lord George Hamilton, both of whom were lukewarm to the prospect of a formalised intelligence function, also insured that departmental products deemed unfavourable would be suppressed at the expense of their colleagues on the Admiralty Board. This is what seems to have happened to Hall's innovative force planning model in May 1888, when Hood and Hamilton initially chose to restrict the circulation of the report in favour of the political agenda of the Salisbury ministry. While the first draft of the report was given to W.H. White - the Director of Naval Construction - there is no evidence that the report was subsequently distributed to the other members of the Admiralty Board. That this report was kept out of the hands of the other Naval Lords was underscored by the fact that Beresford had no idea that it existed until years later.[94] Such was the situation that confronted Captain Hall in the Admiralty in the late 1880s, which was only exacerbated by the salary reductions that appeared to be an act of retribution against the

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[93] See Footnote 56.

[94] Beresford, p. 353 and 361. In his memoirs, Beresford refers to Captain Hall as 'a most distinguished and patriotic officer' who in 1888 had 'worked out the problem of naval requirements independently' of the Board. This he claimed to have learned only years later, for he never had any communication with Hall on the subject.

department. This is what finally prompted Beresford to resign his post on the Board, and to seek out another means to promote a heightened sense of strategic awareness in naval policy formulation. These were the two primary aims of the public campaign of 1888, the immediate cause of the Naval Defence Act and the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Implementing Strategic Ideas:

Politicians vs. Professionals in the Public Campaign of 1888

INTRODUCTION

Thus far in this study the naval members of the Admiralty Board, with a particular emphasis on the performance of Admiral Sir Arthur Hood, have generally been depicted as powerless to reverse the most harmful practices of their civilian political masters. Of these the most injurious to the operational effectiveness of the service was the annual budgetary process, where finances and not force requirements were the final arbiter of naval policy. Serving as First Naval Lord from 1885 to 1889, Admiral Hood cannot be excused for his decisive inaction in this regard, for he possessed the influence afforded to his position as well as the knowledge that past naval lords were willing to exchange 'alarmist' assessments for increased naval expenditures and new naval construction. He was no doubt aware of the exploits of Admirals Sir Spencer Robinson and Sir Alexander Milne during the 1860s and 1870s, respectively, when both men attempted to compel the civilian leadership to accept the necessity of additional ironclad construction. Robinson was ultimately successful in this endeavour while Milne was forcefully rebuffed by George J. Goschen, the First Lord in 1873 who now served in the Salisbury ministry as Chancellor of the Exchequer.[1] The fact that Hood chose not to pursue a similar course suggests that he either quietly sympathised with the First Lord or was unwilling to subject Lord George Hamilton to 'alarmist' sentiments they both knew were baseless and lacked corroboration from the Naval Intelligence Department. There is yet another plausible explanation for his motivations - Hood encouraged a decision environment in the Admiralty that was essentially resistant to innovation, which explains why he chose to suppress the Hall force planning analysis until the political atmosphere was generally amenable to the prospect of an extensive shipbuilding programme.

Serving under Hood for two years on the Admiralty Board, Captain Lord Charles Beresford was well aware of the circumstances that confounded naval policy formulation in Britain, most especially the failure of the Board to formulate a coherent strategic doctrine from which to determine future shipbuilding requirements. In his memoirs, Beresford expressed his hope that the creation of the Naval Intelligence Department, under the capable direction of Captain W.H. Hall, would instil a heightened sense of strategic awareness that would manifest itself in Admiralty policy. 'The efficiency of the whole service was, in my view, bound up with the efficiency of the Intelligence Department', Beresford observed in 1914, 'because that department was created for the express purpose of estimating and reporting what was required to enable the Navy to fulfil its duties'.[2] His view of the department was so resolute in fact that Beresford eventually chose to resign his position on the Board over what he believed to be an effort to trivialise the work of the new department by reducing the salaries and the morale of the officers

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[1] For more on this point, see John F. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era, 1866-1880*, (Palo Alto 1997), p. 95-96 and p. 152-153.
[2] Lord Charles Beresford, *The Memoirs of Lord Charles Beresford*, (London 1914), p. 353.

who staffed it. While the lure of the limelight may have encouraged his decision to resign, Beresford's experience with the Board no doubt convinced him of the necessity to arouse public support for reform in British naval administration.

What followed was an extraordinary campaign undertaken by naval officers to pressure the Salisbury ministry to embrace the demands for heightened strategic awareness in naval policy formulation. The purpose of this chapter is highlight the activities of those officers who, through their lectures, speeches and frequent commentaries in *The Times*, succeeded in their efforts to ensure that key policy choices were reflective of the strategic ideas preponderant in mainstream naval professional opinion. It is divided into four main sections. The first section considers the aftermath of the Beresford resignation, with particular emphasis upon the attempts made by politicians and professionals to manipulate the press in support of their contradictory assessments of British naval capabilities and the logic behind them. It is here where the absence of strategic thinking is most apparent in the creative statistics supplied by Hamilton, who between January and June 1888 was unable to deflect widespread criticism of the naval tonnage calculations he used to assess comparative naval strength and formulate Admiralty shipbuilding requirements.

The next section highlights the insertion of strategic ideas into the debate unfolding in the press and at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), where in May 1888 Admiral P.H. Colomb advocated a return to the core strategic principles illustrated in British naval history and which remained relevant to contemporary policy settings. The third section emphasises the extent to which the campaign became increasingly organised among prominent naval officers and interested parties in the private sector, whose activities culminated in the City National Defence Meeting in June 1888. Of particular interest here is the role of Admiral Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, whose increased presence during this stage of the campaign was deemed critical by Beresford, Colomb and Captain C.C.P. Fitzgerald, the three principal spokesmen in favour of a new era of British naval policy. Finally, the chapter concludes with the policy deliberations that resulted from the ideas and actions of these naval officers, most notably the articulation of strategic policy in the Admiralty in July 1888 and the shipbuilding programme that later became authorised by the Naval Defence Act.

THE AFTERMATH OF THE BERESFORD RESIGNATION

Captain Lord Charles Beresford officially tendered his resignation on 9 January 1888, an event that prompted a collective sigh of relief from the Salisbury ministry. Within a few days, however, his resignation received widespread attention from the political press in Britain, most especially from the editors of the *St. James Gazette* and *The Times*. Beresford, after all, was the first major defection from the Salisbury ministry since the resignation of Randolph Churchill in 1886, who

resigned his portfolio as Chancellor of the Exchequer in opposition to Salisbury's refusal to reduce the service budgets beyond prescribed levels of expenditure.[3] In the absence of a statement from either the Admiralty or from Beresford himself, the daily journals were left to editorialise and speculate as to the reasons that prompted his departure. The editor of the *St. James Gazette*, Frederick Greenwood, opined confidently that 'Lord Charles Beresford understands his business. He knows what he wants because he knows what the Navy wants; and if - as is highly probable - he has spoken his mind with great freedom; if he has been uncompromising and even rudely so, it is because he is convinced that what the Navy wants it wants very badly indeed'.[4]

Although *The Times* and its editor, G.E. Buckle, were generally supportive of the Salisbury ministry, he too sided with Beresford and portrayed the Admiralty as 'too snug a nest of well-paid officials and comfortable sinecurists' who perform little or no work in return for generous salaries.[5] The most widely circulated daily journal in London, *The Times* also reserved considerable space for letters written by senior naval officers who approved of the action taken by Beresford. Admiral Sir George Eliot, for example, predicted that 'the entire naval service will admire...the almost solitary instance of an officer abandoning the sweets of the office and incurring the displeasure of bigoted politicians and breaking up friendly ties out of devotion for the service which he belongs, and of which he is so bright an ornament'.[6] Perhaps the most insightful letter, however, was published in the *St. James Gazette* and written anonymously by an obvious Admiralty insider and fellow supporter of the work of the Naval Intelligence Department.

> Lord Charles Beresford represents a strong body of opinion, not only inside but outside the Admiralty, hostile to what they consider the parsimonious policy of politicians who look more to small savings than to the efficiency of the Navy. The issue between the two camps has been taken upon what Lord Charles regards as the most important department in the Admiralty - the Intelligence Department; but it is not so much the department that is in question, as the whole policy of which the treatment of it by the political authorities is an example. It may be that in this particular matter Lord Charles is wrong - upon that it is unnecessary to express an opinion. Certainly his opponents will be able to make out a plausible case in favour of the reduction [of the intelligence department]. But, on the other hand, I for one consider that he is right in the great importance he attaches to the efficiency of the department, and that he has chosen a good point on which to raise the whole question of the efficiency of the Navy generally.[7]

Beresford's first comments about his resignation appeared in a speech to his constituency of East Marylebone at the end of January. Beside him on the dais was Admiral Hornby, an officer so highly regarded throughout his career that he posthumously earned the distinction of being

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[3] For more on the Churchill resignation, see Andrew Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan*, (London 1999), pp. 407-422.
[4] *St. James Gazette*, 19 January 1888, p. 3.
[5] *The Times*, 27 January 1888, p. 9.
[6] *The Times*, 3 February 1888, p. 7.
[7] *St. Jame's Gazette*, 25 January 1888, p.4.

'universally recognized in the navy as the highest authority on naval tactics and naval strategy'.[8] Although he never experienced naval warfare first hand, Hornby was instilled with what John Knox Laughton called 'a very exceptional familiarity with fleets, but had also been the recipient of the traditions and reflections of past generations'.[9] For this reason, he was known throughout the service as 'Uncle Geoff', and his admirers frequently sought his counsel on a variety of naval subjects.[10] Those who corresponded with him represented the elite of the British naval establishment, among them Laughton, Bridge, Colomb, Hall, Custance, Fisher and Tryon. It is thus not surprising why Beresford appealed to Hornby for his support and presence at the meeting with his constituents. 'Please come and support me by your presence', Beresford wrote to Hornby on 22 January, 'and I may ask you to say a few words if you support my views as expressed.... You know the case. I protest against a system of administration that reduced our Navy to such a state of disorganisation that we could not have used what we *have* got'.[11] Unfortunately for the historian, Hornby's statement in favour of Beresford was not recorded for purposes of posterity, but the overall theme of his remarks was captured in subsequent correspondence between the two men. 'I felt quite proud when you said that I had another constituency: The Navy', Beresford wrote to Hornby on the day following his speech. 'My whole object has been and will be to give expression to the views I believe to be those of the service. I do hope it may do good. But I shall peg away in Parliament and keep it going as well as I can'.[12]

The Response from the Admiralty

The controversy brewing over the Beresford resignation could not have come at a more inopportune time for the Salisbury ministry and in particular Lord George Hamilton, who as First Lord was expected to defend its naval policy when Parliament reconvened in March 1888. He fully expected Beresford to use his seat in the House of Commons as political platform from which to challenge Hamilton and the Salisbury ministry over the fate of the intelligence department. To pre-empt such a challenge, Hamilton decided to answer the allegations from Beresford with his own public speeches and leaks to the press. In a speech to his constituency of Ealing Broadway, the First Lord argued that 'Lord Charles has resigned because he objects to the First Lord having supreme power, and because he considers that in a particular instance I made an

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[8] Sidney Lee, (ed), *Dictionary of National Biography*, Supplement to Volume II, (London 1901), p. 443. Entry written by John Knox Laughton.
[9] Ibid.
[10] For more on Hornby's career and his influence in the Royal Navy, see Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command*, (London 1996), pp. 184-89 and 279-283.
[11] Beresford to Hornby, 22 January 1888. [N]ational [M]aritime [M]useum, PHI/120(c). Emphasis in the original.
[12] Beresford to Hornby, 27 January 1888. N.M.M. PHI/120(c).

improper use of it'.[13] Hamilton also provided his version of the events that led to Beresford's resignation, explaining why the he approved the salary reductions for the intelligence department without consulting his professional advisors beforehand. In effect, Hamilton trivialised Beresford's objections to this action, and portrayed him as an intransigent Board member who was willing to resign over the paltry sum of £900 if the decision was not reversed to his satisfaction.[14]

Hamilton's speech also contained the politically expedient themes of financial reform and accountability in the armed services, which had been successful in the past for the Salisbury ministry. One area that he highlighted in particular were the dockyard reform initiatives enacted during his naval administration. 'Perhaps you are not aware', the First Lord observed to his constituents, 'that a great and much needed reform in this direction has during the last two years been quietly been carried out in the dockyards of this country....Ships can now be built as expeditiously in the dockyards as in private yards, and waste has been stopped and reforms initiated in every direction'.[15] He referred to this achievement as the work of the entire Admiralty Board, which alone would ensure that the Royal Navy remained quantitatively superior to its potential adversaries in Europe. 'By keeping the number of ships building within the *compass of finance* we are able to put the maximum number of men that be economically employed upon each, and we advance our building programme about 30 percent faster than any other nation in Europe'.[16] Finally, and most importantly, Hamilton concluded his speech with a mixture of fact and boastful prediction that would later become a recurrent theme in his speeches in the Commons: 'Our relative superiority to other fleets is greater now than it has been for years past. Next year and the year after it will be greater still'.[17]

In the weeks leading up to the next session of Parliament, Hamilton also leaked a memorandum to the press, which was promptly published in *The Times* and elsewhere on 6 March. The motivation behind the leak was immediately questioned in Parliament two days hence, when Hamilton was asked to explain just how the London and provincial newspapers could have received it prior to the members of the House.[18] Hamilton was terse in his reply, and simply noted that the House members should have received it the same day it appeared in the press, but that 'a mistake of an official' had prevented the distribution of the memorandum until

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[13] *The Times*, 4 February 1888, p. 12.
[14] For an account of the controversy over the salary reductions in the Naval Intelligence Department, see Matthew Allen, 'The Foreign Intelligence Committee and the Origins of the Naval Intelligence Department of the Admiralty', *Mariner's Mirror*, (February 1995), p 73-74.
[15] *The Times*, 4 February 1888, p. 12.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] *Hansard*, 3rd Series, 8 March 1888, Col. 581-582. ZHC 2/285.

the next day. Hamilton also belatedly assured his colleagues that steps would be taken to prevent such an occurrence in the future.[19]

The memorandum, which was to be included in the presentation of the annual service estimates to Parliament, outlined the types and quantities of vessels included in the shipbuilding programme proposed by the Admiralty Board. What was proposed by the Government was a modest shipbuilding programme that was based on a number of factors, including the force requirements of navy as well as 'careful examination' accorded to 'the shipbuilding policy now being pursued by foreign navies'.[20] No allusion was made by Hamilton to the linkage between the roles and missions of the service and the forces required to achieve them; a quantitative comparison was all that Hamilton believed was necessary to reassure the public of the superiority of British naval capabilities *vis-à-vis* France and Russia:

> The experience gained since last year and the opportunities afforded during the time of making close and minute comparison between the strength of this country and that of foreign nations confirms my previous statement that our relative superiority is undoubted, and that we shall, if the present expenditure be maintained, each year increase that superiority.[21]

While Hamilton refrained in the memorandum from providing specific sums to be spent for each class of vessel, *The Times* later revealed that the total cost for new shipbuilding construction would consume about £2,700,270.[22] Subsequent analysis of the estimates by Lord Brassey reduced this amount to about £2,667,000 excluding indirect charges.[23] Of this amount, £1,944,814 was allocated for the construction of two first-class cruisers - *Blake* and *Blenheim* - along with five *Medea* second-class cruisers and 2 third-class cruisers. What was particularly noteworthy about these vessels were their armament and speed, all of which were designed to reach or exceed 19 knots.[24] But what Brassey found most regrettable were Admiralty plans to spend £621,186 for sloops, gunboats and torpedo gunboats, which in his estimation were far too slow and 'designed only for peace requirements, not suitable by reason of insufficiency of speed for the protection of commerce, and not powerful enough for the line of battle'.[25] Another curious aspect of the programme was the absence of any provision for first-class armourclads (late battleships), the Board having decided to refrain from building any more of these vessels until the completion of outstanding work on the five *Admirals – Anson, Benbow, Camperdown, Howe* and

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[19] Ibid.
[20] *The Times*, 6 March 1888, p. 4.
[21] Ibid.
[22] *The Times*, 12 March 1888, p. 9.
[23] *Hansard*, 3rd Series, 9 July 1888, col. 694-696. ZHC 2/287.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

Rodney – as well as the four *Victoria*- and *Trafalgar*-class turret ships.[26] Thus, in total, the shipbuilding programme proposed by the Government would provide 24 vessels of varied types to the Royal Navy, most of which would contribute little to the wartime functions of the service.

In leaking the memorandum before it was distributed to House members, Hamilton received an immediate endorsement from G.E. Buckle, the editor of *The Times* who exclaimed that 'the statement of the First Lord is calculated to afford no little satisfaction to Parliament and the country. We may accept it as an earnest introduction of a new and more business-like spirit into naval administration'.[27] Yet, at the same time, the memorandum revealed a considerable lack of strategic vision on the part of the First Lord, particularly his inference that the Royal Navy in the future may be unable to protect the commerce of the country. 'The conditions of naval warfare have so changed and are so changing from day to day that nothing but actual experience could justify any confident prediction as to how a thoroughly effective protection can be given by any fleet to a commerce whose seagoing steam tonnage is double that of the rest of the world?'.[28] It were statements like these that elicited concern among senior naval officers. 'For the first time in my life I think', confessed Admiral P.H. Colomb to Admiral Hornby in early March, 'I am quite seriously alarmed at the A[rmy] and N[avy] Estimates. It is not so much the actual state of these, as the spirit which has dictated them that I am frightened at'.[29]

Colomb was particularly concerned that the service budget was framed without any consideration accorded to core strategic principles, which were reflected by a forward offensive naval strategy and the protection it afforded to the mercantile fleet in wartime. What was required, he reminded Hornby, was the provision of naval squadrons that would ensure 'command of the sea' and with it the protection of commerce:

> [I]f we provide moderate blockading squadrons - proportionate to the number of ships we know to be within the enemy's ports - and a moderate reserve squadron at home...there cannot be any of these attacks feared. But if these squadrons are not provided, and the home reserve squadron is not part of a settled policy, then our ports will be blockaded and our people starved.[30]

Hornby was also beseeched by Colomb to further these views in a letter to *The Times*: '[Y]ou hardly know what an influence your name has not only on the Navy, but on the Country...'.[31] In a similar vein, Rear Admiral R.C. Mayne (Ret.), of late a member of the House of Commons, also

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[26] *The Times*, 6 March 1888, p. 4. The vessels of the *Victoria*-class included the H.M.S. *Victoria* and *Sans Pareil*, both of which were finally completed in 1890-91 and about the same time as the two *Trafalgars* - H.M.S *Trafalgar* and *Nile*. For more on these vessels, see Roger Chesneau and Eugene M. Kolesnik, (eds), *Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships, 1860-1905*, (London 1979), pp. 29-31.
[27] Ibid, p. 9.
[28] Ibid, p. 4.
[29] P.H. Colomb to Hornby, 4 March 1888. N.M.M. PHI/120(c).
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

wrote to Hornby to request his assistance in formulating an effective argument in opposition to the Government's representations about its naval policy. Assuring Hornby that the navy 'counter' was unified in the House, Mayne informed him what he wished to accomplish: 'I propose to endeavour to show the "system" - for it is that we must attack - is bad from top to bottom, and that nothing shows this more clearly than Lord George Hamilton's own speeches. Is there any chance you will be in town soon? As I should like to have a talk with you about it'.[32] Hornby replied within days of the request, providing Mayne with data that prompted the latter to admit that '[t]hough I was cognisant of the fact that we were deficient in fast cruisers...I never realised it fully till I read your list'.[33]

Parliamentary Debate and Investigation over Naval Policy

British naval policy and the Beresford resignation were the two foremost topics of discussion when Parliament convened in the second week of March 1888. Beresford, wasted no time in outlining his objections to the manner in which Hamilton and the Admiralty Board calculated the navy budget, with a particular emphasis on the failure to formulate a shipbuilding programme that took into consideration the wartime contingencies of the Royal Navy. Knowing exactly what to ask of the First Lord of the Admiralty, Beresford invited Hamilton to reveal the extent to which the Admiralty was prepared for hostilities with one or more peer competitors. 'I challenge the First Lord to produce any plan of campaign, any plan for the protection of the Mercantile Marine, or any organisation for war whatever, except a defective paper on mobilisation. I know from experience they do not exist'.[34] Beresford also accused his former childhood classmate of devaluing the work of the Naval Intelligence Department, as it 'ought to be the best brains of the whole Service, and the best men ought to be in it'.[35] Finally, the former Junior Naval Lord attacked the manner in which British naval capabilities were assessed on the basis of numerical comparisons with France and Russia. He referred to this caustically as 'the book-keeping way of measuring the strength of the Navy, simply by adding up two columns to see whether we had more ironclads than any other country'.[36] Such an assessment was analytically bankrupt, as the roles and missions of the Royal Navy in wartime far exceeded that of its hypothetical adversaries.

In reply, Hamilton defended his observations as to the relative naval strengths of Britain, France and Russia: 'I do not know by what means you can test the relative superiority of this country as compared with other countries except by taking the number of ships, the number of

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[32] R.C. Mayne to Hornby, 15 February 1888. N.M.M. PHI/120(c).
[33] R.C. Mayne to Hornby, 1 March 1888. N.M.M. PHI/120(c).
[34] *Hansard*, 3rd Series, 12 March 1888, Col. 933. ZHC 2/285. See also *The Times*, 13 March 1888, p. 7.
[35] Ibid., Col. 945.
[36] Ibid., Col. 938.

men, and the guns, which those respective countries have'.[37] He implored his colleagues to accept the fact that 'our relative superiority as far as fighting power is concerned is established, and that if we continue upon our programme we shall continue to make a greater advance in superiority'.[38] What Hamilton failed to address to their satisfaction, however, was their concern over whether or not British naval capabilities were indeed sufficient when considering the vast roles and missions of the service in wartime. Captain Penrose Fitzgerald, R.N., M.P., reminded the First Lord of a point that to him was seemingly lost in quantitative comparisons, that being the indisputable fact that in the past 'England occupied a different position from other nations with regard to her Navy.... Of such importance to England was the command of the sea that it was little short of madness not to be assured that our Navy was able to perform all the duties which would be required of it'.[39] Equally unconvinced was Captain John Colomb, R.M.A., who in his own speech sought to transform the debate into a general discussion of British naval policy. No doubt advised by his brother, Colomb reminded the House that the organisation for war must ultimately be fashioned according to the naval policy of the country, which in turn must be formulated by the ideas and experiences of their predecessors. The critical element to this policy was a forward offensive naval strategy and the doctrine of close blockade. With this in mind, Colomb called on the First Lord to reveal whether or not such a strategy was still advocated by the Admiralty. Only then could he and his colleagues determine whether the Royal Navy indeed was prepared to fulfil its wartime functions.[40]

What resulted from this exchange was agreement on 13 March to refer the issue to a Select Committee tasked with a mandate to consider the adequacy of the naval estimates. Appointed to serve on this committee were spokesmen for both sides of the debate, and included Beresford, Hamilton, Mayne, Arthur Forwood, Edward Reed and Henry Campell-Bannerman. With Campell-Bannerman in the chair, the Select Committee began its work in April 1888 with the testimony of Evan McGregor, the Permanent Secretary of the Admiralty.[41] In the following months, the committee would hear evidence from three Naval Lords - Admirals Hood, Hoskins and Hotham - in addition to Hamilton and Forwood. While the committee held hearings and heard testimony from both politicians and professionals in the Admiralty, the evidence it accumulated during its five-month existence was more helpful to the historian in 2000 than to the policymaker in 1888. In the end, the work of the committee members came to nought, as the four reports completed were neither conclusive or successful in remedying the weaknesses in Admiralty administration.

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[37] *The Times*, 13 March 1888, p. 7.
[38] Ibid.
[39] *Hansard*, 3rd Series, 12 March 1888, Col 981-982. ZHC 2/285.
[40] *The Times*, 16 March 1888, p.7.
[41] Parliamentary Papers, Select Committee on Navy Estimates (1888), First Report.

The same can be said for the work of the Hartington Commission, the origins of which can also be traced to March 1888, when House members demanded that a Royal Commission be established to consider 'the extent to which our present naval and military systems, as at present and organized and administered, are adapted to the national wants'.[42] The Salisbury ministry initially demurred at such a request on the grounds that the terms of reference were unacceptable. After months of sidestepping the issue, it was left to W.H. Smith to explain to the House that, in the opinion of the ministry, the proposed scope of the committee was so wide as 'to render it impossible for any Commission to report within a reasonable period upon any of the points about which the House and country want advice and guidance. The terms of reference have therefore been restricted to those points upon which the greatest desire for inquiry prevails'.[43] Reminding his colleagues that the commission would not consider the efficiency of the navy, Smith provided the terms of reference that were acceptable to the Salisbury ministry: 'To inquire into the civil and professional administration of the Naval and Military Departments, and the relation of those departments to each other and [the] Treasury; and to report what changes in the existing system would tend to the efficiency and economy of public service'.[44] The Hartington commission was eventually formed in May 1888, but in spite of the 'restrictions' in the terms of reference, the committee would issue two reports - one in 1889 and the other in 1890 - both of which were preceded by the passage of the Naval Defence Act.[45]

Thus, with the formation of the Select Committee in March and the prospect for a Royal commission to follow, House members turned their attention to other matters requiring debate and legislation, chief among them was the lingering controversy over the question of home rule in Ireland.[46] This, however, had little effect in discouraging the tit for tat between politicians and professionals. The exchanges generally followed a similar pattern that normally began with speeches by either Hamilton and Forwood, in full expectation that their comments would be printed in *The Times* on the following day. This was normally followed by letters published in *The Times*, written either by Beresford himself or other prominent naval officers and fellow parliamentarians who supported his views. A typical exchange of this type first occurred at the end of month, when on 21 March Hamilton was invited to speak at the annual dinner of the Royal Institute of Naval Architects. With Beresford and Admiral Colomb in attendance, the First Lord

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[42] *The Times*, 17 April 1888, p. 6.
[43] *The Times*, 5 May 1888, p. 9
[44] Ibid.
[45] *Evidence, Written and Oral, taken by the Royal Commission appointed to Enquire into the Civil and Professional Administration of the Naval and Military Departments and the Relationship of those Departments to each other and to the Treasury, (generally known as the Hartington Commission).* HO 73/35/3.
[46] Roberts, 'Salisbury', pp. 442-458; and David Steele, *Lord Salisbury: A Political Biography*, (London 1999), pp. 209-220.

commented that, 'great as was the experience of the naval officers in matters needing administration, there were many which were in the main civil, and of which the naval officers had not the monopoly of experience'.[47] With references to more facts and figures, Hamilton claimed that his representations should be enough to assuage the sceptics of his administration, and even went so far as to assure his audience that British naval capabilities were sufficient 'to guard the nation against risk of danger from any hostile combination'.[48] Forwood would continue this theme two days later, when he was asked to address the annual dinner of the London Chamber of Commerce. He dismissed the 'exaggerated' charges that were being made against the Admiralty, and insisted that British naval capabilities were sufficient 'to cope with any reasonable combination of foreign powers'.[49] As evidence, Forwood cited the 'battleship-gap' that existed between Britain, France and Russia. He claimed that Britain possessed 34 battleships at the end of 1887, whereas France and Russia together possessed only 26 battleships. This disparity in the number of capital ships was not expected to change in the near future.[50]

As expected, the two speeches provoked a lengthy response from Beresford. In a letter to *The Times* and published on 26 March, the former Junior Naval Lord took particular exception to the comments made by Forwood, who as the Parliamentary Secretary of the Admiralty was extremely unpopular among naval officers serving there. He cautioned his readers that Forwood was responsible for the financial aspects of naval administration, but in this speech the Parliamentary Secretary 'takes the responsibility for the fighting efficiency of the fleet by making statements which the British public will think are made by a person who is entirely conversant with the matter on which he gives his *ipse dixit*'.[51] He again sought to discredit the comparison referred to by Forwood, suggesting that the numbers used were 'totally and dangerously misleading'.[52] In his estimate, comparisons such as these were particularly fallacious when the Admiralty Board did not possess a plan of campaign to fight the next naval war. 'But what is the use of flashing these comparisons before the British public when there is no organization or suggestion of what you would do with these vessels when you came to the actual test of fighting?'.[53]

This was followed in less than week by a letter to *The Times* written by Captain C.C.P. Fitzgerald. While Beresford had been well supported by naval officers far more distinguished than Fitzgerald, the junior officer would later prove instrumental in organising the City National Defence Meeting in June 1888. Similar to Beresford in many respects, Fitzgerald shared with his

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[47] *The Times*, 22 March 1888, p. 10.
[48] Ibid.
[49] *The Times*, 23 March 1888, p. 10
[50] Ibid.
[51] *The Times*, 26 March 1888, p. 10.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

more famous colleague a self-professed disaffection for inactivity and an underlying devotion to the profession. 'Being of a restless disposition and failing to appreciate the charms of idleness', Fitzgerald would later observe in his memoirs, 'I looked around for some object which might be at least innocent and perhaps worthy of my attention...and it was not long before I joined a gang of conspirators known as the "panic-mongers and chronic alarmists", who were trying to awaken their countrymen to the fact that our Navy has been allowed to fall in a state of weakness...'.[54]

In his letter of 30 March, Fitzgerald embraced the role of an 'alarmist', a description he fully expected to be attributed to him in light of the attacks levied against Beresford and his supporters in recent weeks. He seconded Beresford's arguments against the numerical comparisons used by Hamilton and Forwood, that despite a 30 to 40 percent superiority in naval tonnage the Royal Navy still did not possess the capabilities to accomplish the roles and missions traditionally assigned to it. This, he believed, would become immediately obvious to the policymaker if he would 'take the trouble to sit down with a paper and pencil and add up a few figures, and then look at the problem by the twin lights of history and geography'.[55] Invoking the lessons of history, Fitzgerald further warned that numerical comparisons of opposing fleets would not by themselves assure British naval supremacy in the event of war with France and Russia. As an example, he referred to the strategic situation that confronted Britain in 1805, when the combined fleets of France and Spain challenged British naval supremacy. The Royal Navy ultimately prevailed despite a numerical disadvantage, and the fact that it did so under such adverse circumstances devalued the use of numerical comparisons in assessing comparative naval strength. 'In estimating what will be required of the British navy in case of war', Fitzgerald observed, 'history will be a tolerably correct guide....[A]lways bear in mind that our difficulties will be increased by the introduction of steam and quadrupling of our commerce'.[56] Finally, and most importantly, Fitzgerald implored his readers to reach their own conclusions in full view of the professional arguments made by Captain John Colomb and his less famous brother, the admiral and naval historian.

THE WEIGHT OF STRATEGIC IDEAS AND NAVAL HISTORY IN THE PUBLIC CAMPAIGN

Having retired from active service in May 1886, Admiral P.H. Colomb embarked on a second vocation that was merely an extension of the first, that being a former practitioner interested in the teachings of naval history and their relevance to contemporary policy questions confronting the Admiralty. The range of his activities during his retirement was impressive if not exhaustive, and the vast scope of his knowledge in naval affairs was unmatched by his colleagues still in uniform.

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[54] C.C.P. Fitzgerald, *From Sail to Steam: Naval Reflections, 1878-1905*, (London 1916), p. 156-157.
[55] *The Times*, 30 March 1888, p. 4.
[56] Ibid.

Colomb was especially active at RUSI where, among service officers and parliament ministers, discussions in the semi-official think tank frequently turned on issues of naval technology, strategy and tactics. He quickly became a prominent speaker at RUSI, and the first of two papers given there in 1887 received the highest honour in the annual essay contest.[57] His reputation as a well-versed essayist and service intellectual now firmly established, Colomb involved himself in a number of activities between 1887 and 1888 to influence policymakers over the course of British naval policy.

Colomb accomplished this through his lectures and frequent letters to *The Times*, whose readers undoubtedly included those in Whitehall whom he wished influence most. Aside from his lectures at RUSI, Colomb was invited by the Admiralty Board in March 1887 to continue the course of lectures in naval strategy and tactics at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich.[58] He promptly accepted the invitation within weeks, his enthusiasm for the endeavour no doubt attributable to his perceived weight of the subject and the underlying imperative to continue the historical themes of his predecessor.[59] John Knox Laughton considered Colomb to be a logical choice to succeed him. 'Always a man of strong literary instincts', Laughton wrote of Colomb in his entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, 'in his retirement he devoted himself more and more to the study of history as a key to the many problems of naval policy and strategy which are continuing arising'.[60]

Laughton also referred to Colomb as an 'untiring correspondent of *The Times*', as evidenced by his frequent contributions to the journal whenever he felt it necessary to offer his opinion on any naval subject receiving particular attention in the press.[61] His penchant for submitting letters to the journal was so well known in the service that he was derisively referred to as 'Colombus', 'Colomb-Inches', or 'Colomb-and-a-half' of *The Times*.[62] It was thus no surprise when Colomb responded to the letter written by Fitzgerald with his own, published in *The Times* on 5 April 1888.[63] 'The allusion which Captain Fitzgerald has made to my views on this question will, perhaps, excuse me for asking a little space to develop them', wrote Colomb.[64] In it he aligned himself publicly with the positions taken by Fitzgerald and Beresford. His response was both supportive and didactic in tone, expounding on the potential of naval history as an abundant source of guidance in shaping British naval policy. This despite the transition from sail to steam:

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[57] P.H. Colomb, 'Convoys: Are They Any Longer Possible?', *RUSI Journal* (1887).
[58] Admiralty Board Minutes, 15 March 1887. ADM 167/19.
[59] Admiralty Board Minutes, 11 April 1887. ADM 167/19.
[60] Sidney Lee, (ed), *Dictionary of National Biography*, Supplement to Volume II, (London 1901), p. 49-50. Entry written by John Knox Laughton.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Gordon, p. 186. The last name was found in an unpublished manuscript written by his daughter E.E. Colomb. I am indebted to my supervisor Professor Andrew Lambert for providing me with this manuscript.
[63] C.C.P. Fitzgerald, *The Times*, 30 March 1888, p. 4.

'As I studied the past and compared it with the present, I found point by point arising and convincing me that the historical chain was complete, and that steam, so far from breaking it, had hardened and strengthened the links'.[65]

From his perspective, naval history provided the substantive rationale in favour of a forward offensive naval strategy and the traditional doctrines of blockade and coastal assault. Offensive operations such as these would ensure command of the sea, which in turn would afford adequate commerce protection and shield the Home islands from invasion. And the mixture and level of forces required to secure command of the sea was the same as in years past. 'We require a naval force of the ironclad sort, or whatever may, in naval opinion, represent the line-of-battle ship of the past, in sufficient quantity to watch and render neutral the same sort of force which the enemy may be able to prepare in his great war ports'.[66] Whether or not such a policy was still in force in the Admiralty remained unknown to him, a fact that he underscored by the questions posed at the conclusion of his letter: 'When did we part from these old rules of naval war? And if an answer could be forthcoming - which is not the case - we should further ask why did we part from them?'.[67]

In writing this letter, Colomb was apparently venting his private frustration with the Admiralty over its failure to articulate a coherent naval policy, especially when the elements of that policy existed in the wartime experiences of their predecessors. Colomb fretted that the Admiralty Board was not only displaying a careless disregard for these experiences but had strayed from the strategic traditions of the service. His lectures during his first year at Greenwich reflected his desire to ensure that naval history remained the common currency of naval strategy and tactics. The underlying themes of these lectures were ultimately reflected in the questions he prepared for the final course examination. He sent them to Admiral Hornby in May 1888, knowing all too well that his old patron would appreciate his endeavours at the College:

1. Explain the effect of the growth of sea-borne commerce on the course of naval war.
2. What is the nature of "Convoy", and how has it been carried on for outward and homeward bound commerce? Show where it has failed, and consider its application to present conditions of commerce.
3. Define and illustrate by historical examples what is meant by the "Command of the Sea", and how it is asserted and maintained.
4. Trace the principles of "Blockade", and consider its application to existing conditions.[68]

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[64] P.H. Colomb, *The Times*, 5 April 1888, p. 3.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Colomb to Hornby, 29 May 1888. N.M.M. PHI/120(c).

Questions 2 and 4 were already the subjects of the two lectures Colomb had delivered at RUSI in 1887. The first, delivered in March 1887, was devoted to a larger discussion of convoy operations and their contemporary application despite the advent of steam propulsion. With Laughton as his guide through naval history, Colomb considered the efficacy of such operations in the past, and concluded that 'steam is in every way in favour of a revival of convoy, and if nothing else prevented such revival but the change in the mechanical condition of trading ships, convoy in the next war might be expected to revive'.[69] In his view, merchant steamers were no longer the 'helpless flock of sheep' that could be poached by faster unarmoured cruisers. Merchant steamers now possessed the requisite speed and, in some cases, the light armament necessary to evade capture by the enemy. Nevertheless, a formal system of naval protection for the slower steaming vessels was critical at the onset of hostilities. Instead of convoy operations in the traditional sense, Colomb suggested an offensive orientation whereby merchant steamers in the Channel would be protected by a chain of cruisers cooperating with one another through the use of signal posts. These posts would then be used to request reinforcement should the enemy approach the route with a superior force. Once the merchant steamers exited the Channel they would be free to pursue their own navigational course to their respective destinations, but would be strongly advised to possess light armament. British naval squadrons, meanwhile, would be concentrated on or about the narrow seas, straits and other strategic chokepoints deemed vital for protection.[70]

How the Royal Navy would ensure commerce protection in wartime was also the subject of his second lecture at RUSI two months later, when Colomb provided a reassessment of the strategic doctrine of close blockade, which was again in favour in naval policy circles. The crux of his arguments were again rooted in the lessons of naval history, which he believed were equally relevant in contemporary policy settings: '[I]t is impossible to form correct views of the present and future of naval warfare unless they are based on a pretty thorough investigation of its history in the past'.[71] In so doing, Colomb distinguished between three different forms of blockade, which he termed 'Sealing-Up', 'Observation' and 'Masking'. With a number of historical examples at hand, Colomb conceded that British naval blockades were no longer impenetrable, due to mainly to the advent of steam propulsion and fast cruisers that could exceed 20 knots. As a result, British naval squadrons could no longer 'seal-up' enemy ports and prevent the egress of every enemy cruiser attempting to evade the blockade.

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[69] Colomb, 'Convoys', p. 304.
[70] Ibid.
[71] P.H. Colomb, 'Blockades: Under Existing Conditions of Warfare', *RUSI Journal*, (1887), p. 735.

However, Colomb believed it was still possible for British naval squadrons to observe and mask the enemy fleet with a considerable amount of success. He envisioned the use of the new 'torpedo-catchers' of the *Sharpshooter* class – with their superior speed and low draught – to close with and observe enemy warships in port for the purpose of collecting intelligence on their intentions and anticipated movements. These specialised vessels would be detached from a superior force awaiting updates on enemy fleet movements. 'In the case of vessels or squadrons attempting to escape', Colomb explained, 'it would be less the duty of these [specialised] ships to engage them, than to hang on their flanks and continually report their movements by signal to the off-shore squadron, which would detach and concentrate sufficient force to intercept the runaways'.[72] In sum, Colomb believed that the close blockade was still practicable in offensive naval warfare, the purpose of which was to achieve and exploit command of the sea. As the importance of command of the sea was often taken for granted by British policymakers, Colomb concluded his lecture with an ominous warning: 'Keep command of the sea as you value your national life. With it you can do everything. Without it you will be blotted out from the list of great countries'.[73]

Strategic Awareness and the Higher Policy of Defence

Thus, in the course of two lectures in 1887, Colomb provided the Admiralty with the broad outlines of a strategic policy from which to base future shipbuilding requirements. That this did not happen only reinforced his perception that the Admiralty Board had failed to grasp the importance of strategic thinking in naval policy formulation. With his penchant for sharing his views with others, it would have therefore been impossible for Admiral Colomb to resist the temptation to comment further on a debate that, at this point, was limited mainly to the exchanges between Lord Charles Beresford and Lord George Hamilton. In May 1888, Colomb again returned to the lecture podium at RUSI, a forum that he was accustomed to and where his audience undoubtedly included a mixture of well-connected politicians and professionals. The seemingly innocuous title of the paper – 'The Naval Defences of the United Kingdom' – hinted strongly at general overview of the subject, but in actuality Colomb had prepared a tightly argued case in favour of the core strategic principles that traditionally shaped key policy decisions in wartime.

He presented these arguments by comparing two naval strategies exemplified in British naval history, which he credited to Lord St. Vincent and Lord Howe. Colomb argued that St. Vincent favoured a forward offensive naval strategy where British naval squadrons blockaded the ports of

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[72] Ibid., p. 751.
[73] Ibid., p. 752.

their French and Spanish adversaries. This was considered by him to be the first line of defence; the second and third lines of defence consisted of an ample reserve squadron and two auxiliary squadrons, respectively. In contrast, Lord Howe believed that blockading operations conferred an undue advantage to the enemy, especially when considering the materiel and physical hardships that inevitably result from the protracted nature of such operations. As a result, Howe adopted a naval strategy along a defensive orientation, preferring in 1793 to base the grand fleet at Torbay and a reserve fleet at St. Helens. Only when it came known that the enemy fleet had finally emerged from its ports would the fleets be deployed for decisive action.

Before assessing the costs and benefits of both naval strategies, Colomb posed a number of rhetorical questions, which in and of themselves are significant as they reveal his overall agenda and the real audience of his lecture – the Admiralty: 'Now there are before us two systems of naval defence, one older than the other and superseded by it. Do we still hold by the system to which experience ultimately led us? If we do not hold it, why have we abandoned it? And what have we substituted for it?'.[74] Colomb then proceeded to outline his case in favour of the core strategic principles adopted by Lord St. Vincent. 'I think it is imperative on us to prepare to adopt St. Vincent's method', Colomb explained, 'and that solely on account of our commerce'.[75] He argued that the Howe system did not afford adequate commerce protection, as it yielded the initiative to the enemy and with it an opportunity to pursue a destructive *guerre de course.* On the other hand, Colomb pointed to the commerce protection afforded from British blockading squadrons. 'When the system of blockade was adopted, the necessity for large convoys was to a great extent abrogated, and latterly it appears as if only the single privateer, or the very small group of privateers, were able to escape to sea and attack our commerce, which, to suffer, must have either been very slenderly guarded or not guarded at all.'[76]

Colomb then turned his attention to recent trends in naval shipbuilding. He warned of the 'strategical error' of building warships that were not reflections of a clearly articulated naval policy. He also referred to the construction of coastal defence vessels and fortifications as both wasteful and excessive, especially when a smaller number of ironclads – designed for purposes of blockade and coastal assault – would afford the same amount of protection. 'The error we have fallen into arises', Colomb observed, 'from forgetting that the strategy of a naval Power in command of the sea is necessarily diverse from that of the naval Power which cannot hope to have it'.[77] To underscore this point, he cited the construction of the coastal defence vessels

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[74] P.H. Colomb, 'The Naval Defences of the United Kingdom', *RUSI Journal*, (1888), p. 569.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., p. 579.
[77] Ibid., p. 577.

building in France as the physical reflections of a reactive and defensive naval strategy that automatically yielded command of the sea to Britain. Thus, for this reason, it was imperative for the Admiralty to formulate a strategic policy from which to base force requirements and a capital ship design policy that was reflective roles and missions of British naval squadrons. He made the same argument back in 1887. '[W]e want in our shipbuilding policy to settle, before we build the ship, exactly what she is wanted to do, and when we know what she is wanted to do...then I think we may proceed to build her on a proper design for the object in view'.[78]

Colomb expanded on this point even further now, and he reminded his audience that strategic choices – whether it be the strategic policies followed either by Lord St. Vincent or Lord Howe – must always inform and precede force structure decisions made by the Admiralty. It was imperative for the Admiralty in 1888 to make these important choices, and to pursue a shipbuilding programme that was reflective of core strategic principles. He argued that the situation confounding the Admiralty would be permanently effaced once a heightened degree of strategic awareness became a permanent feature in naval policy formulation. If achieved, British naval policy would again be guided by the core strategic principles advocated by Lord St. Vincent. 'My paper is nothing but that I say in my own belief that the blockade system is the system which we ought to work for, and begin about tomorrow, and to build our ships on purpose for it'.[79]

The public reaction to the Colomb lecture was considerable. *The Times* provided expanded coverage of this 'very important and striking lecture', which could only have delighted Colomb and the naval officers whose views he represented so well.[80] The editor, G.E. Buckle, proclaimed Colomb's professional arguments to be 'logical, coherent and intelligible, and based on successful experience'.[81] More importantly, for the first time since the public campaign started with the Beresford resignation, Buckle sided firmly with the professionals rather than the politicians in the Salisbury ministry: '[T]he paramount necessity is manifest of adopting a coherent, intelligible, and adequate scheme of naval policy, adopted with the utmost nicety to such conditions of modern warfare as are determinate and leaving a reasonable margin of security for such as are uncertain and indeterminate'.[82] Unwilling to leave it there, *The Times* also published a lengthy article written days later by an anonymous contributor and appropriately titled 'The Higher Policy of Naval Defence'.[83] Most likely written by Laughton, the article applauded the Colomb lecture

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[78] Colomb, 'Convoys', p. 322.
[79] Ibid., p. 598.
[80] *The Times*, 19 May 1888, p. 11.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] *The Times*, 25 May 1888, p. 8.

and endorsed his brand of strategic thinking as a shaping influence over the conduct of British naval policy:

> Admiral Colomb's valuable essay has prepared the way for discussion on the only true lines of bringing sober history to bear upon the airy generalities which have been plentifully scattered around. The policy which has been successful in the past, which has brought the Empire not safety alone, but conquest, may apparently be our guide today. We are here on firm ground at last and, starting from such a basis, it becomes possible to lay down the outlines of the higher policy referred to.[84]

Unwilling to leave it there, Admiral Colomb contributed yet another letter to *The Times* on 31 May, in which he elaborated further on the value of the blockade and responded to his critics who doubted the effectiveness of blockading operations.[85] In this regard, he claimed to have secured the support of Admiral Hornby, who according to Colomb had considered his distinction between the three forms of blockade to be of paramount importance when formulating naval strategy. Returning to the themes he advocated since 1887, Colomb argued that blockading operations should be limited to the masking of the enemy fleet in their home anchorages. Again using France as the example, he envisioned a scenario whereby the Royal Navy would mask the enemy fleets harboured at Cherbourg, Brest, Rochefort and Toulon while sealing-up the commercial ports of Dunkirk, Calais, Boulogne, Havre and St. Malo. With this accomplished, the Royal Navy would then undertake offensive coastal operations that included the mining of French naval ports as well as the seizure and holding of territory for use as forward naval bases. British preparations for these operations, if known to their potential adversaries, would certainly add to the deterrent value of the Royal Navy. 'I know of one thing which would altogether prevent our indulging in these various naval pleasures', observed Colomb, 'and that is that the whole world should know we are ready and willing to begin about them at short notice'.[86] All that was needed now was for the Admiralty Board to fully consider the implications of the naval professional arguments advocated by Beresford, Colomb, Fitzgerald and others over the past few months. In the coming weeks, their efforts would succeed in reshaping the political atmosphere in Whitehall and compel the Salisbury ministry to conduct its first cabinet-level strategic review.

THE HORNBY FACTOR AND THE CITY NATIONAL DEFENCE MEETING

At this point, the public campaign for heightened strategic awareness was limited primarily to speeches, lectures and letters written for domestic consumption in *The Times*. Aside from the literary exertions of Admiral Colomb, Beresford continued to write lengthy contributions to *The Times* and even expanded his efforts to include articles in the monthly journals. In his private correspondence with Admiral Hornby, Beresford announced his intention to write at least one of

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[84] Ibid.
[85] *The Times*, 31 May 1888, p. 12.
[86] Ibid.

these articles per month, the first two appearing consecutively in the journal *Nineteenth Century* in May and June 1888.[87] Numerous letters and articles were also written by Captain C.C.P. Fitzgerald during this period, who continued to write in *The Times* and the monthly journal *Blackwood's Magazine.*

What these officers also had in common was their mutual regard for Admiral Hornby, whose public stature was enhanced further by his promotion to Admiral-of-the-Fleet in May 1888. Hornby had heretofore assumed a supportive role in the overall effort, providing information and professional opinions to those in a better position to argue the case on behalf of the service. Now he was receiving countless letters from Fitzgerald, Beresford, Colomb and others requesting him to assume a more active role in the public campaign. Admiral Colomb had already made a similar suggestion to Hornby in early March. Now it was the turn of Captain Fitzgerald, on 10 April, to make his own appeal:

> Write to *The Times* and stir them up; your name would have great weight, and they will all go to sleep unless the ball is kept rolling; the only way to make people pay attention is to keep on irritating them. A few isolated shots are not much good, but a steady continuous fire from all quarters might cause the country to think seriously of its situation whilst the day of grace still holds. The more one looks into the matter of our naval weakness even as against France alone, the worse it appears; and this is also the opinion of all three Captains of the Intelligence Department, whose special business it is to study the subject.[88]

Hornby was a strong advocate of the intelligence department, and in particular Captain W.H. Hall, a fact not lost upon Fitzgerald given Hornby's recent editorial in support of him. Wrote Hornby of the D.N.I.: 'No one values more highly than I do Captain Hall and the remarkable work he has done'.[89] With this in mind, Hornby agreed to address the London Chamber of Commerce on 28 May.[90] Beresford was asked to preside over the Hornby presentation, where the Admiral was expected to outline the shortcomings of Admiralty policy and the limited resources available to afford adequate commerce protection to the mercantile fleet. Beresford was delighted to hear of Hornby's much anticipated address. 'Perhaps your don't know it', he wrote to Hornby on 25 April, 'but the whole service looks to you as our big man, and you can do more than all of us together to drive the nails home that reformers are striking into the public mood'.[91] Beresford also expressed his confidence that the presentation would incite public interest to ensure the adequate protection of commerce flowing to and from Britain. 'Your paper will give a

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[87] Lord Charles Beresford, 'The Admiralty Confusion and its Cure', *Nineteenth Century*, (May 1888); and idem., 'Imperial Safety: A Workable Admiralty', *Nineteenth Century*, (June 1888). On his writing intentions, see Beresford to Hornby, 27 April 1888. N.M.M. PHI/120(c).

[88] Fitzgerald to Hornby, 10 April 1888. N.M.M. PHI/120(c). The officers Fitzgerald refers to here are Captains Hall, Custance and Eardley-Wilmot, all of whom served in the intelligence department.

[89] *St. James Gazette*, 9 January 1888, p. 3.

[90] Beresford to Hornby, 25 April 1888. N.M.M. PHI/120(c).

[91] Ibid.

tremendous feeling to the question of the defence of our mercantile marine. The present advertised system seems to do nothing till war is declared and then by personal experience of loss, to see what should be done on another occasion'.[92] To assist him in this regard, Hornby wrote to Captains Hall and Fisher in the Admiralty, seeking information from the D.N.I and D.N.O. in preparation for his address to the Chamber of Commerce. Both men promptly furnished what information they could to Hornby, despite a 'special' warning from the Admiralty Board.[93] Fisher skirted around the warning, providing Hornby with a newspaper article that was written 'independent of official information'.[94]

Preparations for the City National Defence Meeting

During the critical months of April and May 1888, Admiral Hornby also became involved with preparations for a public meeting in the City of London. The purpose of what became known as the City National Defence Meeting was twofold. The organisers of the meeting first wished to appeal directly to commercial leaders and businessmen, especially those from the maritime insurance and commerce sectors. Such an appeal was useful in the past, when in 1885 a similar meeting was convened at the behest of W.H. Smith, a former First Lord and current House Leader then in opposition to the second Gladstone ministry (1880-1885).[95] The results were budgetary increases in naval expenditures, from £10.7 million in 1884-85 to £11.4 million in 1885-86. But the motivations of the meeting organisers in 1888 varied somewhat from those of W.H. Smith in 1885. While supportive of an increase in naval expenditures, they also wanted to reform the process in which naval policy was formulated by the Salisbury ministry.

The idea for the City National Defence Meeting seems to have originated from Beresford, who first referred to the efficacy of such a meeting in late March.[96] But it was Captain Fitzgerald who served as the principal organiser with overtures to his cousin Henry Hucks Gibbs, the financier of the *St. James Gazette* and 1st Baron Aldenham whose active participation in the Smith meeting had been critical in 1885.[97] When the idea for such a meeting began to take hold, Beresford wrote to Hornby to secure his support and attendance. 'I hope you will be able to attend and say a few words there too, as your name on the circulars will be such a tremendous strength to the object we have all in view'.[98] Hornby's presence at the meeting was deemed so important that Beresford

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[92] Ibid.
[93] Fisher to Hornby, 12 May 1888; Hall to Hornby, 17 May 1888; and Fisher to Hornby, 21 May 1888. All were found in N.M.M. PHI/120(c).
[94] Fisher to Hornby, 12 May 1888. N.M.M. PHI/120(c).
[95] For more on W.H. Smith and the results of the meeting in 1885, see Stephen R.B. Smith, 'Public Opinion, the Navy and the City of London: The Drive for Naval Expansion in the Late Nineteenth Century', *War & Society*, (May 1991), p. 32-36.
[96] *The Times*, 26 March 1888, p. 10.
[97] Fitzgerald to Hornby, 10 April 1888. N.M.M. PHI/120(c). See also Smith, p. 33.
[98] Beresford to Hornby, 25 April 1888. N.M.M. PHI/120(c).

dispatched another letter to him only days later, in which he again urged Hornby to attend and to convince others to attend as well. 'Do go on and get others to go on too', he wrote to Hornby on 27 April. 'People are beginning to listen....We are sure to win but it will take us a little time and a heap of trouble'.[99]

Ironically, the trouble anticipated by Beresford arrived in the form of two letters from W.H. Smith, who attempted to quash the meeting on behalf of the Salisbury ministry.[100] His pleas to the committee organisers unsuccessful, Beresford and Fitzgerald continued their preparations for the meeting, with the assistance of three prominent civilians from the private sector - H.O. Arnold-Forster, John J. Jackson and Alex Wood.[101] On 10 May, the organisers requested *The Times* to publish a circular to publicise the importance of the upcoming City National Defence Meeting. The stated purpose of the meeting was to promote further dialogue on the subject and to demand remedial action from the Salisbury ministry:

> The only remedy to avert disaster is to demand from the Government an immediate inquiry into the strength of the Navy, and more particularly with regard to the urgent necessity of adding several fast cruisers to the fleet for the safeguard and protection of our mercantile marine, which carries out food supplies and raw material, and also the completion of our coast and harbour defences and coaling stations.[102]

In the days following the public notification, a second meeting among the organisers was held at the Cannon Street Hotel, which happened to be the site of the Smith precedent in 1885. Hornby was in attendance at that meeting, and even offered to address the future City National Defence Meeting on the subject of commerce protection and the inadequacy of the fleet.[103] The organisers also decided at this meeting to request permission to convene the proceedings at the Guildhall, which required the approval of the Lord Mayor of London. The request was summarily rejected in no uncertain terms by P. De Keyser, who owed his appointment as Lord Mayor to Salisbury. Expressing the support of his principal benefactor in a letter in *The Times*, the Lord Mayor believed that the citizens of London did not share the concerns of the organisers and the objects in their view.[104] 'On the contrary', remarked De Keyser, 'I believe there is a strong feeling among them that the discreditable panic which has been recently created in the matter of national defences has gone too far already'.[105] He therefore concluded that 'a public meeting would, I am sure, have no effect whatever, moral or otherwise, and I can be no party to fomenting an unpatriotic agitation which is unworthy of this great nation'.[106]

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[99] Beresford to Hornby, 27 April 1888. N.M.M. PHI/120(c).
[100] Bruce to Hornby, 29 April 1888. N.M.M. PHI120(c).
[101] Smith, p. 38.
[102] *The Times*, 10 May 1888, p. 12.
[103] *The Times*, 15 May 1888, p. 10.
[104] *The Times*, 18 May 1888, p. 10.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.

The Salisbury ministry was already attempting to minimise the potential impact of the City National Defence Meeting, especially now that Smith's efforts to quash it were unsuccessful. In a speech at the annual banquet of the Royal Academy of Arts, Lord George Hamilton refused to waver on his assessment of British naval capabilities and the proposed shipbuilding programme. 'We are now stronger than we were this time 12 months back', Hamilton confidently observed, 'and if our present policy and programme be not interfered with, year after year we shall continue to gain strength and to accumulate a reserve of power'.[107] With Beresford and Hornby in attendance, the First Lord pleaded with them not to use their widespread popularity to incite public alarm. Instead, Hamilton suggested that these 'distinguished and gallant officers' focus their energies in a more constructive fashion. 'If they will only exercise their influence on trying to steady public opinion and prevent it from rushing to any ephemeral extremes', Hamilton concluded, 'they will do much to permanently promote the efficiency of the service in which they are interested, and they will certainly do much to lighten that burden of anxiety and responsibility which must ever rest on the shoulders of those who are temporarily entrusted with the administration of Her Majesty's Navy'.[108]

Strategic Thinking, Naval History, and the City National Defence Meeting

While it is unknown if Admiral P.H. Colomb conferred with the organisers of the City National Defence Meeting, to be held on 5 June 1888, his thought provoking lecture at RUSI on 18 May provided the historical arguments in favour of heightened strategic awareness in naval policy formulation. As noted above, the overall theme of the Colomb lecture was well-received in *The Times* and elsewhere, and the publicity that followed afforded Colomb with the opportunity to further arouse public support for the issues that would soon be addressed by his naval colleagues only days later. But Colomb was not the only service intellectual who was active in this regard during these two weeks. Captain Cyprian Bridge wrote to *The Times* on 23 May, on the occasion of the upcoming Armada Tercentenary.[109] The purpose of Bridge's letter was to draw attention to the lessons to be learned from the Armada experience, and in particular the insightful comments of his friend John Knox Laughton at a lecture on the same subject at RUSI on 5 May.[110]

Heretofore, Laughton had preferred to remain outside of the controversy over British naval capabilities, but in this lecture Laughton alluded to what he believed was the core issue and the means to redress it. 'Money will do a great deal, but the want shown is not that of money, but of

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[107] *The Times*, 7 May 1888, p. 12.
[108] Ibid.
[109] *The Times*, 23 May 1888, p. 6.
[110] The lecture was entitled 'The Invincible Armada'. See Lambert, 'Foundations', p. 98-99.

intelligence, care, judgement and economy. In these matters, we should do well to imitate the great men in the past'.[111] Bridge went even further on this point, warning in his letter that 'it will be a pity if we fail to learn the lessons which that stupendously important event ought to teach us'.[112] In his estimation, the most important lesson to be derived from the Armada experience was the overarching importance of 'undisputed' command of the sea, from which the peoples and commerce of the Empire were protected from foreign subversion. It was therefore a strategic imperative for the Royal Navy to be well prepared for similar challenges in the future. 'Notwithstanding all the millions the British taxpayer gives we are now farther from being able to do so than we were in the year of Poitiers or the year of Blenheim. At the same time our interests on the sea have enormously increased, and we are less than ever in a position to fritter away what should be devoted to their protection'.[113]

Hornby was well aware of the historical arguments posited by Bridge and Laughton, the themes of which were no doubt conveyed in the past by his close friend Laughton when Hornby was the President of the Royal Naval College at Greenwich (1880-81). On 28 May, Hornby premised his address to the London Chamber of Commerce on the lessons of naval history.[114] With Captain Lord Charles Beresford presiding over the affair, the Hornby address was numerously attended by an impressive number of senior naval officers and influential politicians, many of whom would also attend the City National Defence Meeting in the following week. The address itself contained many illustrative facts and figures, some of which originated from Captains Fisher and Hall in the Admiralty, and coupled with a number of ominous implications stemming from inadequate commerce protection. The speech, while it succeeded in exposing the weaknesses inherent in the current system of commerce protection, was also extremely provocative and alarmist in the extreme.

Hornby framed his arguments around two principal observations, both of which were essentially borrowed from Admiral Colomb. The first related to the prospect that blockading operations would prevent the egress of all commerce raiders from enemy ports. This to Hornby was also an unrealistic proposition, cautioning his audience that 'on the whole, it is far more difficult than ever to prevent an enemy from putting to sea'.[115] The second observation pertained to the relative importance of strategic chokepoints in any system of commerce protection adopted by the Royal Navy. 'The points of danger during war to merchant ships are, manifestly, those where they draw together, such as straits and projecting capes; their safety is in the vicinity of

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[111] *The Times*, 7 May 1888, p. 5
[112] *The Times*, 23 May 1888, p. 6.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, 'The Defence of Merchant Ships in Case of War', *The Chamber of Commerce Journal*, (June 1888).
[115] Ibid, p. 126.

neutral waters, or of points occupied by friendly squadrons'.[116] In sum, Hornby sought to evoke an alarmist sentiment that no doubt was intended to inspire businessmen and the public at large to support the views of the senior officer corps, the majority of which were in attendance to hear his speech. He was certainly the most 'alarmist' of the naval officers active in the public campaign, a fact underscored by a subsequent plea from Beresford to tone down the rhetoric and the outrageous shipbuilding estimates. 'Such demands, thought they may be right, will drive the country into thinking we had better take our chances as we are than go into any extra expense at all if it takes so much', wrote Beresford in October 1888. 'The politicians know that and [will] play on it, as Forwood has already with great effect. And we shall get nothing'.[117]

Despite his alarmist rhetoric, Hornby's presence was still deemed by his colleagues as essential to the success of what became the final act of the six-month public campaign of 1888. Hornby had every intention of attending the City National Defence Meeting, but was prevented due to an attack of hepatitis.[118] For a time it was even uncertain whether 'Uncle Geoff' would survive his illness. His presence at the meeting on 5 June was clearly out of the question, but Hornby ensured that his prepared remarks were forwarded to the meeting organisers and read at the proceedings.[119] Despite his noticeable absence - Fisher likened it to 'Hamlet' failing to show up for his own performance - the meeting went forward as planned and was attended by most of the influential senior naval officers, politicians and businessmen in London.[120] Among those present were the most senior members of the British naval establishment, including Admiral Sir Beauchamp Seymour [Lord Alcester], Admiral Sir George Elliot, Admiral Sir Edward Fanshawe, Admiral Sir John Hay, Admiral Sir Edward Ommanney, Admiral Sir Robert Spencer Robinson and Admiral Sir Richard Vesey Hamilton. They were present to hear the speeches by Hornby, Colomb, Beresford and Fitzgerald - the four naval officers who for the past six months conducted themselves as the principal spokesmen of the strategic ideas preponderant among the senior officer corps. Each speaker emphasised the importance of heightened strategic awareness in naval policy formulation, which if achieved would be reflected in key policy decisions in the future. The meeting concluded with a strongly-worded resolution: 'This meeting calls upon Her Majesty's Government to take immediate steps to place the security of the country beyond doubt, and it is convinced that in any financial scheme that may be necessary to place the Navy and defences of the country upon proper footing for the protection of the Empire, her Majesty's Government may be assured of the hearty co-operation of all classes'.[121]

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[116] Ibid.
[117] Beresford to Hornby, 13 October 1888. N.M.M. PHI/120(c).
[118] Mary Augusta Egerton, *Admiral of the Fleet Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby*, (London 1896), p. 371.
[119] *The Times*, 6 June 1888, p. 6.
[120] Fisher to Hornby, 6 June 1888. N.M.M. PHI/120(c).
[121] *The Times*, 6 June 1888, p. 6.

From the vantage of hindsight, the evidence suggests that the Admiralty facade, premised on the creative statistical comparisons offered by Lord George Hamilton and Arthur Forwood, was already beginning to crumble. On 23 May, the Civil Lord of the Admiralty, E. Ashmead Bartlett, conceded at a meeting of the Primrose League that he for one 'would not grudge any expenditure necessary to put the Navy or Army upon a strong or equal footing'.[122] With Beresford in attendance, the Civil Lord even went so far as to acknowledge that 'it would require millions and millions alone to complete this work'.[123] Within two weeks of this admission, Lord Salisbury set in motion a series of events that ultimately led to the formulation and passage of the Naval Defence Act. This never would have been accomplished, however, without the five months of letters, lectures, speeches and other forms of public demonstrations that occurred when naval officers felt compelled to rally public support against the Salisbury ministry on the issue of naval policy. While the Prime Minister may have been impervious to the opinions of the 'service experts' he despised so much, as a politician Salisbury was extremely sensitive to the slightest change in the political climate and immediately embraced the demands for naval modernisation when circumstances compelled him to do so. That the political atmosphere was transformed to such a degree was largely the function of the public campaign of 1888, whose principal organisers were senior naval officers motivated by the strategic ideas they sought to implement in policy deliberations conducted by politicians *and* professionals. Whether they knew it or not, the primary focus of the public campaign – strategic awareness– was finally achieved on 1 July 1888, when Admiral Hood drafted an unprecedented shipbuilding proposal that reflected the outlines of a strategic policy drafted by Captain Hall and the Naval Intelligence Department. The immediate cause of the public campaign was now serving as the strategic conscience of the Admiralty Board, as it was originally intended to do.

EPILOGUE: STRATEGIC POLICY AND THE NAVAL DEFENCE ACT

The articulation of Admiralty strategic policy in July 1888 was the final act needed to convince the Salisbury ministry of the necessity for a new era in British naval policy formulation, where professional opinions received priority over political agendas. In that month, as noted in Chapters 3 and 4, Admiral Hood was requested by the Cabinet to 'state the amount of force which he would require under certain eventualities'.[124] More specifically, the First Naval Lord was asked to formulate his response to three questions drafted after personal consultation with Lord Salisbury:

- What is the amount of naval force necessary in a naval war between this country without allies, and France under similar conditions, in order to protect the coasts of

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[122] *The Times*, 24 May 1888, p. 7.
[123] *The Times*, 24 May 1888, p. 7.
[124] Hamilton to Cabinet, 'Navy Estimates', 10 November 1888. CAB 37/21/14.

the United Kingdom against invasion or bombardment, and to protect the fortresses of Gibraltar and Malta, if attacked by the enemy's fleet?

- What force is required to afford (1) reasonable protection to trade routes, and (2) relief to coaling stations if attacked by a fleet?
- What is the amount of naval force necessary in a naval war between this country without allies, and a combination of France and Russia, in which case Constantinople would have to be defended?[125]

To address each of these questions, Hood relied exclusively on the framework that had been devised originally by Captain Hall in the force planning analysis submitted back in May 1888. Like Hall, the First Naval Lord advocated a combination of blockade and offensive coastal operations. In the event of war with France, for example, Hood envisioned the deployment of two naval forces, one assembled at Gibraltar and superior to that of the French at Toulon, while the other assembled at Portland and was superior to French naval forces at both Cherbourg and Brest. These two battlefleets would be constantly informed of enemy fleet movements by fast cruisers in close watch of these ports, and would be quickly dispatched to intercept French naval squadrons if the latter ever emerged to contest British naval supremacy in the Channel as well as in the Mediterranean. The overall objective here was to effect a close watch of these three ports and to achieve a decisive outcome if provided the opportunity to do so. At the same time, Hood conceded the likelihood that limited numbers of fast enemy cruisers may elude British naval squadrons and, for this reason, the Royal Navy was prepared to station its own cruisers along the principal trading routes and critical strategic chokepoints (ie., the Cape of Good Hope and the Straits of Malacca). Finally, Hood envisaged the immediate reduction of Cherbourg through coastal bombardment and the capture of Goree on the west coast of Africa, which at the time was considered to be a vital coaling station and a potential base from which French cruisers could launch attacks against British commercial interests. In sum, Hood argued that this plan of campaign would afford adequate protection to both the Home isles as well as the maritime commerce flowing to and from Britain.

In such a war with France, Hood concluded that Britain possessed the requisite naval capabilities to accomplish the roles and missions outlined above. The Gibraltar fleet in 1888 was expected to consist of 14 battleships, two armoured cruisers, with two additional battleships and armoured cruisers to be added to the fleet by April 1889. Its Portland counterpart included eight battleships, one armoured cruiser and three armoured coastal defence vessels, to be augmented the next year by one battleship, five armoured cruisers and three armoured coastal defence vessels. Both fleets were to be provided with the 'necessary numbers of cruizers and torpedo-vessels'.[126] But in the event of war with both France and Russia together, these two fleets were hardly sufficient to accomplish the additional roles and missions expected in the Baltic and Black Seas.

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[125] Admiralty Board to Cabinet, 'The Requirements of the British Navy', 1 July 1888. CAB 37/22/36.
[126] Ibid.

These new missions required the diversion of forces from both the Gibraltar and Portland fleets: 'I should propose to station at the entrance of the Baltic, if war broke out *now*, four battleships – two battleships from the fleet to be stationed at Gibraltar and two from the fleet proposed for Portland'.[127] While additional forces would be available in 1889 and 1890, from which to form an independent naval squadron for Baltic operations, there was still the question of defending Constantinople and the absence of a powerful reserve fleet to meet unforeseen contingencies. British naval capabilities were thus stretched to the limit in this scenario, which in Hood's estimation could only be remedied by a shipbuilding programme conceived 'to place this country in a position to meet with undoubted success a combination of France and Russia in a naval war...'.[128] He included in this programme 8 first-class and 2 second-class battleships, 38 improved fast cruisers of the *Mersey*, *Medea* and *Barham* classes, and 18 torpedo-gunboats of the *Sharpshooter* class. These numbers were scaled down slightly from those proposed by Captain Hall, who originally calculated a deficiency of 13 battleships, 38 cruisers and 32 torpedo-gunboats.[129] Nevertheless, the programme proposed by Admiral Hood represented an abrupt reversal of opinion, for only two weeks had passed since the First Naval Lord testified in front of the Select Committee on Navy Estimates that such a programme was unnecessary and that he wished only for six more fast cruisers to be built by the end of 1890![130]

From this point forward, the only significant items left in doubt were the design attributes of the first- and second-class battleships. While historians have commonly treated the issuance of the "Three Admirals Report" – written in the aftermath of the 1888 naval manoeuvres - as the *cause celebre* behind the Naval Defence Act, the archival record indicates that the programme was well in place before the submission of the report to the Admiralty Board on 21 November 1888.[131] By that point, W.H. White, the Director of Naval Construction, had already submitted to the Cabinet on 1 November a memorandum outlining the five-year schedule for the proposed shipbuilding programme.[132] Only days later, on 10 November, Lord George Hamilton finished a draft of the 1889-90 service estimates, which included a discussion of the financial aspects of the

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[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.
[129] N.I.D. Report No. 149a, 'Comparison of the Fleets of England, France and Russia in 1890', May 1888. ADM 231/12.
[130] *Parliamentary Papers*, Select Committee on Navy Estimates (1888), Fourth Report.
[131] The authors of this report were Admirals W.M. Dowell, Richard Vesey Hamilton and Sir Frederick Richards. Their report, while confirming the necessity of the new shipbuilding programme, has received so much attention by historians because it supported the resumption of the two-power standard: '[N]o time should be lost in placing our Navy beyond comparison with that of any two Powers'. The standard was quickly embraced by the Salisbury ministry and served as the underlying basis for both the Naval Defence Act and the Spencer Programme in 1894-95. See Hood to Admiralty Board, 'Committee Upon Late Naval Manoeuvres', 11 October 1888. ADM 1/6926.
[132] W.H. White to Cabinet, 'Special Programme for New Construction, 1889-90 to 1894-95', 1 November 1888. CAB 37/22/30.

programme.[133] Finally, the Admiralty Board convened a special board meeting on 16 November to discuss the specific design attributes for the first-class battleships.[134] Invited to this meeting were White, Admiral J.K.E. Baird and Captains John Fisher and Lord Walter Kerr, in addition to the authors of the "Three Admirals Report".[135] What emerged from this meeting was a clearly articulated capital ship design policy, from which the first battleships of the pre-dreadnought era – the *Royal Sovereign* class – were subsequently designed and built. The Admiralty Board formally approved the designs of the new *Royal Sovereigns* on 19 November and, in less than a year, the first of these new powerful battleships was laid down at Portsmouth on 30 September 1889.[136]

On 11 December, Lord Salisbury wrote to Queen Victoria to inform her that the new shipbuilding programme was formally approved by the Cabinet and was to be forwarded to Parliament when it convened in February 1889.[137] With much anticipation and broad support in the House, the first order of business in the new session was a brief announcement by Lord George Hamilton, assuring his impatient colleagues that the Salisbury ministry would soon introduce the Naval Defence Bill in the following week.[138] The Naval Defence Bill introduced in early March sought to authorize the expenditure of £21,500,000 over five years for the unprecedented peacetime shipbuilding programme, the only difference between the original proposal submitted by Hood and the final version was the addition of four new cruisers made at the behest of the Cabinet.[139] The First Lord of the Admiralty also announced the resumption of the two-power standard and a new era in naval policy formulation in the Admiralty, where the roles and missions of the Royal Navy would now serve as the basis for future shipbuilding programmes.[140] In such a supportive political atmosphere, the outcome of the debate that ensued in the House for the next two months was never in doubt. After three readings of the Bill, the House overwhelmingly approved the popular shipbuilding programme, and it officially became the Naval Defence Act on 31 May 1889.

Thus, in the span of a year, the Salisbury ministry was essentially compelled by a successful public campaign to reform how it formulated British naval policy, complete with a heightened degree of strategic awareness that virtually ensured that naval professional opinion would hence

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[133] Hamilton to Cabinet, 'Navy Estimates 1889-90', 10 November 1888. CAB 37/21/24.
[134] Admiralty Board Minutes, 16 November 1888. ADM 167/20.
[135] White and Fisher at the time were the Directors of Naval Construction and Ordnance, respectively, while Kerr and Baird were invited because of their participation and opinions about the 1888 naval manoeuvres. Admiral Sir George Tryon was also invited to this meeting but could not attend. See Frederic Manning, *The Life of Sir William White*, (London 1923), pp. 241-242; and Ruddock F. Mackay, *Fisher of Kilverstone*, (Oxford 1973), pp. 196-197.
[136] Admiralty Board Minutes, 19 November 1888. ADM 167/20. See also Mackay, p. 197.
[137] Salisbury to Queen Victoria, 11 December 1888. Excerpts reprinted in George Earle Buckle, *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, (London 1930), p. 456.
[138] *The Times*, 22 February 1889, p. 7; and 5 March 1889, p. 6.
[139] *Hansard*, 3rd Series, 7 March 1889, col. 1171-1195, p. 7. ZHC 2/295.

forward provide the substantive rationale behind key policy decisions. The Naval Defence Act that followed in 1889 reflected this sudden shift in emphasis from finance to strategy in naval policy formulation, which was due largely to the ideas and actions of naval officers in the 1880s. No where was this more apparent than in the public campaign that unfolded in the first six months of 1888, when prominent naval officers conducted themselves as institutional patrons of strategic preferences preponderant in the senior officer corps and which were rooted in the wartime experiences of their predecessors. Although the translation of these ideas from theory into practice had already led to a new brand of strategic thinking within the Admiralty, as evidenced in the planning documents of the newly formed intelligence department, an external pathway was necessary to navigate these ideas around considerable bureaucratic opposition to them. It was at this critical juncture when Beresford, Hornby, Colomb and Fitzgerald rallied public opinion in support of strategic awareness, the results of which were extraordinary for its impact upon how politicians viewed the business of naval policy formulation.

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[140] Ibid., p. 1171.

STRATEGIC ADJUSTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

Chapter 6

From Theory into Practice:

Ideas, Institutions and a New Brand of Strategic Thinking in the Bureau of Navigation, 1873-1885

INTRODUCTION

In March 1889, the month in which Parliament undertook its first deliberations of the Naval Defence Act, Benjamin F. Tracy became the last of five politicians to serve in the 1880s as the civilian Secretary of the Navy Department. Within his first year in office, Tracy presided over a firm repudiation of the traditional strategic practices that informed mainstream naval professional opinion, the culmination of which was an appeal to congressional authorities for a formidable fighting force of battleships and armoured cruisers to accompany a forward offensive naval strategy. 'We must have a fleet of battleships to beat off the enemy's fleet on approach', wrote Tracy in his annual report to Congress in November 1889.[1] '[W]e must be able to divert an enemy's force from our coast by threatening his own, for a war, though defensive in principle, may be conducted most effectively by being offensive in its operations'.[2] What followed in the 1890s was a unprecedented transformation of the naval component to American strategic culture, as Congress provided – though reluctantly at first – the funds for the construction of four classes of pre-dreadnought battleships. More importantly, American naval authorities were emboldened by the revelations of a new brand of strategic thinking, later made popular by the historical justifications of Alfred Thayer Mahan, that served collectively as a virtual blueprint for modern seapower formation in the United States.

In the next two chapters, the cultural approach to historical naval analysis will be used to show how this brand of strategic thinking was used by naval officers to shape the rationale behind the decisions of 1889. This is in sharp contrast to the image of naval policy formulation upheld in the Mahan hagiographies, which for obvious reasons chose to overlook the contributions of naval officers other than Mahan in developing a new strategic outlook for the U.S. Navy in the 1890s.[3] In actuality, the origins of this outlook precede Mahan with the founding of the U.S. Naval Institute in 1873, whose most active members quickly became identified as promoting a reform-minded atmosphere within the junior and senior officer corps. From their professional naval arguments emerged the intellectual underpinnings of a service culture that in time would revolve around the membership and activities of the voluntary association of naval officers. The most celebrated naval reformers of the 1880s, in fact, were also active members of the USNI. The individual exploits of Mahan and Stephen Luce are the most widely cited among naval historians, but frequently overlooked is a supporting cast of naval reformers whose own contributions warrant further consideration by scholars. Together these officers represented the intellectual vanguard of a service culture inspired by the notions of naval reform, strategic innovation and the lessons of naval history.

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[1] *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1889*, (Washington 1890), p. 4.
[2] Ibid.
[3] For a sample of the Mahan hagiographies, see Chapter 1, Footnote 7.

The discussion that follows will revolve around the personalities, institutions and events which, between 1873 and 1885, shaped the process in which strategic ideas were inspired and then translated from theory into practice in the policy sphere. It is divided into four main sections. The first section explores the formation and early activities of the USNI in the 1870s, with an emphasis on the research programme to transform mainstream naval professional opinion through the activities of a semi-official think tank devoted exclusively to naval affairs. While lacking an official connection to the Navy Department, the USNI found in 1881 a critical agent of naval reform and institutional sponsor in the offices of the Bureau of Navigation. Accordingly, the second section will highlight the appointment of Commodore John Grimes Walker who, during his eight-year tenure as Bureau chief from 1881 to 1889, created an intellectual sanctuary for reform-minded officers from which to inspire, institutionalise and implement strategic ideas under the auspices of official research institutions. The lobbying effort required by Walker and others to develop, establish and sustain both of these institutions, the Office of Naval Intelligence (1882) and the U.S. Naval War College (1884), will be the subject of the third and fourth sections respectively. As in all of the sections of this chapter, the personal relationships and interactions between the naval reformers, the most important of which was that between Luce and Walker, will be highlighted to underscore the shaping influence of organisational cultures, as reflected in the ideas and actions of naval officers, upon the strategic and force structure choices embodied in the decisions of 1889.

THE U.S. NAVAL INSTITUTE AND THE INSPIRATION OF STRATEGIC IDEAS

From 1775 to 1898, the naval component of American strategic culture was shaped largely by political and strategic circumstances that encouraged a strict defensive orientation. Until the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, American policymakers were continually divided over whether their country should consider a *maritime* aspect to its insular *continental* existence among its neighbours and rivals.[4] When it came to national security, the most divisive issue was over the efficacy of peacetime naval expansion, as American conceptions of security stressed strategic insularity and the doctrines of coastal defence and limited commerce destruction. What was eventually found to be politically acceptable was a small to moderate naval force to be augmented in the event of impending crisis, but in peacetime would be organised and equipped to perform only those roles and missions anticipated in congressional shipbuilding deliberations. There was, moreover, little incentive in Washington to develop a maritime strategic doctrine and dispense with the informal security guarantees extended by Britain and the overwhelming presence of the Royal Navy in the Atlantic. 'For a century after the Peace of Ghent', an American historian once

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[4] A classic account of this debate can be found in Harold and Margaret Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power, 1776-1918*, (Princeton 1939).

conceded, 'the Royal Navy was the main shield of the American Republic against the distresses of Europe'.[5]

There was thus little incentive to depart from the American way of warfare that had remained largely intact for little over a century.[6] The situation was further complicated in the 1870s by evolving nature of naval technology, competing naval strategies, and the general absence of American naval thought. In response to these concerns, a self-selected group of naval officers formed a voluntary organisation in October 1873 for the purpose of providing a forum where discussion and debate on subjects of professional interest could be fostered among naval officers. In attendance at the organising meeting at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis were fifteen officers, most of whom remain unknown to contemporary naval historians.[7] Among the original members of what eventually became known as the U.S. Naval Institute (USNI) were accomplished naval practitioners and service intellectuals, the most notable included Commodore Foxhall Parker, Lt. Commander C.F. Goodrich and Lt. Charles Belknap.[8] Parker, the chairman of the committee which organised the USNI, was well regarded in the naval community for his work on tactical problems, first set forth in *Squadron Tactics under Steam* (1864) and later in *Fleet Tactics under Steam* (1870).[9] Belknap, whose subsequent naval career remained unremarkable, became the most active of the original members after the death of Parker in 1878.[10] But even his efforts were quickly overshadowed by Goodrich, whose subsequent collaboration with Stephen Luce and William Sampson to promote the conditions favourable for strategic naval development will be explored further in this and the next chapter.

At that first meeting, an executive committee was established to organise and schedule future gatherings of the group, which were to be convened once a month during the academic session at Annapolis. This proved to be most convenient to the members, as most if not all of them were faculty instructors or administrators. To encourage membership and promote the evolving aims of the new organisation, it was also agreed to solicit the support of the Navy Department.[11] Accordingly, a letter was immediately sent to Commodore Daniel Ammen, the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation who, along with Commodore C.R.P. Rodgers of the Bureau of Yards and

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[5] Harry L. Coles, *The War of 1812*, (Chicago 1965), p. 271.
[6] Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of Warfare: A History of United States Military Strategy*, (Bloomington 1973), pp. 42-46 and 167-168.
[7] Roy C. Smith III, 'The First Hundred Years Are...', *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (known hereafter as *USNIP*), (October 1973), pp. 50-52.
[8] Lawrence Carroll Allin, *United States Naval Institute: Intellectual Forum of the New Navy, 1873-1889*, (Manhattan 1978), p.24.
[9] John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, (eds), *American National Biography*, Volume 17, (New York 1999), pp. 19-20. Entry written by B.F. Cooling.
[10] Belknap would later serve on the executive board of the USNI in 1880-8 and receive first prize in the annual essay contest sponsored by the Institute. See Charles Belknap, 'The Naval Policy of the United States', *USNIP*, Vol. VI (1880), pp. 375-391.

Docks, happened to be the Bureau chief most receptive to the concept. Ammen as expected endorsed the group and their aims: 'There is, I think, nothing more likely to promote an interest in professional matters, or to increase the usefulness of officers, or their devotion to the service, than a properly organized society as is now initiated'.[12] Also requiring immediate attention was the nomination of a distinguished naval officer and educator to deliver a paper at the next meeting on such short notice. Upon receiving the invitation in Boston in late October, Captain Stephen Luce promptly accepted and prepared within two weeks a lecture on one of his favourite occupational passions - apprentice training in the navy.[13] While not present for the organising meeting the previous month, Luce was later credited by Goodrich for originally encouraging the formation of USNI.[14] This is entirely possible, as Luce was a frequent visitor of the Naval Academy in the 1870s and exchanged correspondence with Foxhall Parker; both of them would later work together in writing articles on a variety of naval subjects.

In subsequent meetings, a constitution for the organisation was written and adopted by the full membership, which comprised 36 naval officers by the end of 1873.[15] The constitution specified the official purpose of the USNI as 'the advancement of professional and scientific knowledge in the Navy' (the addition of 'literary' came in 1884).[16] As the senior officer in the service, Admiral Porter was recognised as the first President of the Institute, although he was quickly replaced in 1874 after showing little interest in its activities. The most important clause in the constitution, however, pertained to the transmission of new ideas and their dissemination throughout the naval service. It specified that 'whenever papers read before the Society, and the discussions growing out of them, shall accumulate in quantities to make one hundred octavo pages printed matter, they shall be prepared for issue in pamphlet form...'.[17] Later in February 1874, the pamphlet was referred to for the first time as the *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, or known simply as the *Proceedings*. The format of the quarterly journal was to follow that adopted in the successful *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* in Britain and *La Revue Maritime et Coloniale* in France.

First appearing in print in 1875, the journal quickly became a popular medium for the transmission of innovative ideas, technological assessments and progress summaries, appraisals of foreign navies, and other policy-related contributions to American naval thought. Among the

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[11] Smith, p. 50-52.
[12] Daniel Ammen to Edward Terry, 21 October 1873. Reprinted in Ibid., p. 7.
[13] Terry to Stephen Luce, 28 October 1873. Luce Papers. N[aval] H[istorical] F[oundation] Collection/L[ibrary] [of] C[ongress]/Reel #5. The paper Luce delivered at that meeting was later published in the first issue of *Proceedings*. See Stephen B. Luce, 'The Manning of Our Navy and Merchant Marine', *USNIP*, Vol. I (1874).
[14] Caspar F. Goodrich, *In Memoriam: Stephen Bleeker Luce*, (New York 1919), p. 3.
[15] Smith, p. 52.
[16] Ibid.

most insightful papers published in the *Proceedings* during the 1870s were indirect strategic discussions by Foxhall Parker, Captain W.N. Jeffers, and Lt. T.B.M. Mason, the latter of whom would later prove instrumental in the creation of the Office of Naval Intelligence in 1882.[18] In a paper published in the first issue of *Proceedings*, Parker related his sobering observations of American naval preparations and capabilities following the seizure of the American-registered *Virginius* in 1873 by the Spanish cruiser *Tornado* off the coast of Cuba. When preparing to seek retribution for the summary execution of 37 crew members, who were rightly accused of aiding Cuban insurrectionists, the Americans assembled a squadron off Key West for manoeuvres and quickly discovered that their vessels were ill-prepared and equipped for a confrontation with Spanish ironclads. Parker, who witnessed the manoeuvres firsthand, decried in his paper the dreadful condition of the assembled fleet, and suggested a remedial shipbuilding programme on the basis of functional specialisation. Parker envisioned a fleet of cruisers, rams and torpedo boats, all of which were expected to close with and destroy an enemy squadron off the coast of the United States.

Similarly, in the same issue, Jeffers transformed a discussion of naval armament into a critique of American shipbuilding policy. The current Chief of the Bureau of Ordnance was particularly critical of the prevailing naval strategy and operational doctrine:

> It is very right that when a vessel of war encounters a superior force, speed should be able to make her safe, but the necessary diminution of offensive power should not be so great as to disable a first-class steamer from matching any vessel of her own class of inferior speed, but provided with a proper armament; otherwise its usual business would be running - fighting [would be] the exception!
>
> Although the large vessels of the *Tennessee* and *Florida* were constructed on the theory of cutting up an enemy's commerce and flying from its cruisers, yet it is repugnant to our nation to employ such large and expensive vessels for this purpose.[19]

Mason, in a lecture subsequently published in 1876, adopted a more creative and highly imaginative approach to underscore the near-term potential for American naval modernisation, while at the same time alluding to the consequences of failing to address the shortcomings in American naval policy. These themes were firmly present in two exchanges of correspondence between fictional naval officers, the imaginary conversations first occurring in 1880 and later in 1906. The first exchange of letters takes place in the aftermath of 'War of 1880', when following a disastrous naval campaign an officer bitterly complains about the inferior quality of American warships and the shortsightedness that resulted in the unfortunate outcome. 'As soon as they were in range, we opened fire, but we might as well have been throwing peas at a stone wall, whereas

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[17] Ibid., p. 60.
[18] Foxhall Parker, 'Our Fleet Manoeuvres in the Bay of Florida, and the Navy of the Future', *USNIP*, Vol. I (1874), pp. 163-166; William N. Jeffers, 'The Armament of Our Ships in War', *USNIP*, Vol. I (1874), pp. 105-122; and T.B.M. Mason, 'Two Lessons from the Future', *USNIP*, Vol. II (1876), pp. 57-74.

we received a number of heavy shells, some passing through us and some bursting onboard us...and our ship went down in no time'.[20] In contrast, the second group of letters exchanged in 1906 describes a modernised American battlefleet composed of armoured vessels, cruisers and rams. Mason's main letter-writer also includes a rather detailed description of a modern system of American naval tactics, which emphasised the offensive advantages of concentration and superior firepower to engage and destroy an opponent approaching the American coastline. Thus, in the latter years of the 1870s, Mason and other members of the USNI were actively considering a departure from the strategic and shipbuilding practices that traditionally informed mainstream professional naval opinion in the United States. The *Proceedings* ensured that these innovative ideas were available to naval and congressional authorities in Washington, provided of course that the intended audience was receptive to the prospect of an American revolution in naval affairs.

Still, however, it would be incorrect to exaggerate the influence of the USNI and that of its members in the 1870s. The USNI was indeed emerging during this period as an 'informal guild' and a 'lobbying body for career officers', as aptly described in a recent discourse on the intellectual roots of American naval strategy.[21] While membership in the voluntary organisation remained exceptionally low throughout the 1870s and 1880s, the USNI included within its rolls an exceptional complement of naval practitioners and service intellectuals.[22] From discussions of professional naval subjects arose a service culture that essentially defined itself around the primary aims and activities of the USNI. '[T]he absorption with strategy and ship design was ultimately a self-perpetuating concern,' observes an American student of naval affairs, 'arising from an inner circle of common intellectual interest....Their world of thought and social activity was the realm of strategic debates'.[23] Among the most active members in the 1870s were the most celebrated naval reformers of the 1880s - Luce, Mahan, Sampson, Goodrich, Soley and Mason - all of whom shared an agenda that led them to promote the conditions favourable for strategic and naval modernisation. Yet the underlying influence of the USNI and its members were initially constrained in the 1870s for reasons due primarily to its minority status within the naval establishment. What was required was a powerful patron in the Navy Department, if not the department secretary then a Bureau chief who wielded considerable influence in the business of naval administration.

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[19] Jeffers, p. 118.
[20] Mason, 'Two Lessons', p. 58.
[21] Benjamin L. Apt, 'Mahan's Forebearers: The Debate over Maritime Strategy, 1868-1883', *Naval War College Review*, (Summer 1997), p. 93.
[22] See 'Annual Report of the Secretary and Treasurer', *USNIP*, Vol.XV. (1889), p. 166. It is important to note that in a 10-year period, from January 1879 to January 1889, membership in the USNI increased to 862 members, an impressive increase of 595 members since 1879. Most of these new members joined between 1880-1885, afterwards the rate slowed to an average of only 25 new members per year.
[23] Apt, p. 108.

A PATRON AND INSTITUTIONAL SPONSOR IN THE NAVY DEPARTMENT

In the 1880s, support for the membership and activities of the USNI gradually increased through the growing popularity of the quarterly journal *Proceedings* and the themes contained therein. By December 1881, in fact, the work of the USNI received particular attention from the Secretary of the Navy himself. In a response to a request from the Institute to purchase 100 subscriptions of the *Proceedings*, Secretary William H. Hunt ordered 50 annual subscriptions for specific use by officers in the Navy Department. Thus, while the order was only half of the amount suggested by the Institute, the work of the USNI finally received the 'solid foundation' it sought from the Navy Department, especially now the department secretary extended his 'official' approval of Institute's efforts to encourage the 'advancement of professional and scientific knowledge in the Navy'.[24]

But selling copies of the journal to the department was one thing; patronage beyond the honorific was something else. To translate ideas about naval reform into policy required the active patronage from a highly-placed department official with the power, influence and political capital to expend for the sake of small minority within the junior and senior officer corps. The USNI and the reforms advocated by its members needed such a person if it was to effect any progress toward a modernised fleet and a new strategic doctrine.

Critical Relationships and Formative Experiences: Porter, Luce and Walker

The most obvious choice was Admiral David Dixon Porter, the most senior officer in the Navy who occupied the 'Office of the Admiral'. The son of Admiral David Porter, the younger Porter firmly established his own reputation during the American Civil War, commanding Federal blockading squadrons on the Atlantic and riverine forces on the Mississippi. In the decade following the conflict, Porter emerged as the most powerful and influential officer in the service, benefiting from the personal intervention of President Ulysses Grant and his appointment in March 1869 as a 'technical advisor' to the weak civilian presence in the department. Although a self-styled advocate of reform, Porter made poor decisions that served only to inflame the divisiveness in service opinions, especially between the line and staff officers.[25] In June 1869, George M. Robeson was quickly appointed to replace the figurehead secretary, A.E. Borie, thus ending Porter's brief reign in the Department. His tenure as virtual department secretary unsuccessful, Porter continued as the head of the Board of Inspection, an appointment he held until his death in 1891. While he submitted annual reports to the civilian department secretary, Porter never again achieved the power and influence he exercised in the 1870s. 'His position was

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[24] W. H. Hunt to F.M. Ramsay, 1 December 1881; and Charles Belknap to C.R.P. Rodgers, 17 October 1881. Both reprinted in *USNIP*, Vol. VIII (1882), p. xxviii-xxix.

anomalous and highly unsatisfactory for him', wrote the American naval historian Charles Oscar Paullin. 'Holding the highest rank, he was subordinate to navy bureau chiefs in the councils of the navy. For years he seldom entered the department'.[26]

But Porter never stopped in his efforts to influence the policymakers in their formulation of naval policy, and he maintained contacts in both the Congress and in the White House. In April 1881, Porter wrote to President James Garfield, whose Republican administration was less than a month old.[27] He urged the new chief executive to shake up the department with the appointment of a fresh group of naval officers to replace the Bureau chiefs he considered grossly negligent in their duties. Once again, Porter's suggestions were not acted upon, except when it came the Bureau of Navigation, the most powerful of the seven Bureaus in the department. Porter informed Garfield that the current Bureau chief - Commodore William Danforth Whiting - was blind and totally incapable of performing his duties. In his place, he suggested the appointment of Captain John Grimes Walker who, in the opinion of Porter, was 'one of the most ablest officers of his grade, noted for his administrative ability and integrity, and he will lend all his energies to put a stop to fraud [in] the Navy Department'.[28] Walker was notified of his appointment by Secretary Hunt four months later, and eventually assumed the position as Chief of the Bureau of Navigation on 18 October 1881.[29] It was a position that he would not vacate until late 1889.

Walker was someone Porter knew quite well. A veteran of the Civil War, Walker distinguished himself under his command in a number of naval campaigns, first with the Mississippi Squadron and later on the Atlantic coast blockade.[30] Porter considered Walker to be one of his ablest officers, so much so that latter was appointed to his staff when Porter served as Superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy. While at Annapolis from 1866 to 1869, Walker's position as the personal aid to his mentor afforded him opportunities to interact with some of the brightest minds among the faculty and midshipman.[31] Among those present at Annapolis were Lt. Commanders William T. Sampson and William Bainbridge-Hoff, and Cadets T.B.M. Mason, Raymond P. Rodgers, Seaton Schroeder and Richard Wainwright. Their individual talents would later be tapped by Walker throughout his tenure as Chief of the Bureau of Navigation.[32]

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[25] Lance C. Buhl, 'Mariners and Machines: Resistance to Technological Change in the American Navy, 1865-1869', *The Journal of American History*, (December 1974), pp. 703-727.
[26] Dumas Malone, (ed), *The Dictionary of American Biography*, Volume VIII, (New York 1963), pp. 85-88. Entry written by Charles Oscar Paullin.
[27] David D. Porter to James Garfield, 12 April 1881. Porter Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #2.
[28] Ibid.
[29] John Grimes Walker to William H. Hunt, 8 August 1881. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/ Container #1.
[30] Dumas Malone, (ed), *Dictionary of American Biography*, Volume X, (New York 1936), p. 349. Entry written by Allan Westcott.
[31] Ibid.
[32] The contributions of these naval officers, particularly Sampson and Mason, will be discussed further in this and the next chapter.

The most important relationship formed at the USNI during this period was that forged between Walker and Stephen Luce. Walker's duties at the academy no doubt required him to work closely with Luce, another Porter protégé who served as Commandant of Midshipman during the first two years of Walker's three-year tenure at Annapolis. As will be developed further below, Walker was more of a practitioner than a service intellectual, but his later initiatives to sustain the efforts of Luce and his supporting cast of emerging service intellectuals implies a commonality in thought - most likely in the areas of naval education and history. Both men certainly shared an avid interest in the naval operations of the Civil War, and it is unclear whether it was Luce or Porter who recommended Walker to a prominent publisher as a potential candidate to author *The Gulf and Inland Waters* - the last of a three part series collectively entitled *The Navy in the Civil War.*[33] In the end, Walker declined the offer to write the book that was eventually written by Alfred Thayer Mahan.[34]

That Walker and Luce respected and confided in each other is quite evident in the correspondence between the two officers. Albert Gleaves, Luce's biographer who knew both men quite well, referred to Walker as a 'strong friend' of Luce who was 'one of the most ablest administrators and executives the Department has ever had'.[35] Gleaves also referred to Walker as 'politically the most powerful man in the service', on account of his close relationship with William B. Allison, Walker's brother-in-law and a Republican senator from Iowa.[36] From as early as 1881, Allison served as the chairman of the powerful appropriations committee in the Senate, which controlled the Navy Department's budgetary allocations until 1899.[37]

While it was clearly evident to his friends and colleagues that Walker was a talented and well-connected naval officer, Walker himself harboured certain doubts as to the future of his career in the navy. Like many of his peers at the time, Walker was granted a two-year leave of absence in 1879 so that he could explore an alternative career in the private sector. He chose the railroad industry, securing a position with the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad.[38] During that time, he immersed himself in his new profession and had little contact with other naval officers. 'I am digging away here at railroad work and I quite like it', Walker wrote to Admiral Porter in

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[33] Walker to Charles Scribner and Sons, 4 October 1882. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.
[34] A.T. Mahan, *The Gulf and Inland Waters*, (New York 1883).
[35] Albert Gleaves, *Life and Letters of Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce*, (New York 1925), p. 172-73.
[36] Ibid.
[37] For more on the impact of the congressional committees upon naval policy formulation, see Robert G. Albion, 'The Naval Affairs Committees, 1816-1947', *USNIP*, (November 1952).
[38] Daniel Howard Wicks, 'New Navy and Empire: The Life and Times of John Grimes Walker', (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation: University of California, Berkeley, 1979), pp. 38-39.

January 1880.[39] 'I rarely see a naval man and know very little of naval matters. I suppose it is the same old thing, no money and nothing doing'.[40]

This did not mean, however, that Walker was altogether indifferent about the navy. As the expiration of his leave of absence drew close, he confided in other naval officers about the prospects for naval reform, beginning with the present situation in the Navy Department. He was particularly hopeful in the months before the Garfield inauguration in March 1881, observing that 'the best interests of the Navy will be served by putting into those places men not identified with the present clique'.[41] Writing to Commander Albert Kautz, who himself was aspiring to be Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, Walker clearly sided with the young reformers, even those that he did not know.

> I shall be glad to see the incoming Secretary make a clean sweep and make a fresh start with men who can spare some time to look out for the Navy rather than devote their whole to log rolling for themselves. I have been so long out here that I do not know who the younger men will unite upon, but you can count upon me to support "the ticket". I shall be glad to aid the good cause, or yours personally, or both at once....Keep me posted.[42]

Walker, incidentally, warned his ambitious colleague of the consequences of inaction in the event that he was appointed to the Bureau. 'If you go into the Bureau of Navigation and don't show yourself to be better than Whiting', Walker warned Kautz in February 1881, 'I shall be ready to vote to hang you and I shouldn't want to see an old friend strung up either'.[43] In the end, such drastic action was not required, as Kautz failed to secure an appointment to the Bureau. Meanwhile, Walker continued to deliberate about his own future in the navy, and when time came to make a decision, he resigned from his civilian employment to assume command of the U.S.S. *Powhatan*.[44] Even then, however, he doubted whether his decision to return to the navy was the right one. In the days before leaving his employers, Walker apprised Commander [later Admiral] George Dewey of his apprehension, noting solemnly that 'Our people here are very grumpy and disgusted at my leaving them, and I am half inclined to think that I am making an ass of myself'.[45]

Walker promptly arrived in New York in April 1881 to assume command of the U.S.S. *Powhatan*. The surviving correspondence between Walker and Admiral Porter provides little insight into whether or not Walker was aware of his mentor's efforts to place him in the Bureau of Navigation. His response upon hearing of the appointment suggests that he was indeed surprised

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[39] Walker to Porter, 16 January 1880. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Walker to Albert Kautz, 8 February 1881. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Walker to Kautz, 22 February 1881. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.
[44] Walker to President and Board of Directors, CBQ Railroad, 9 March 1881. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.

by his selection. 'I desire to most heartily thank you', Walker wrote to Secretary Hunt in August 1881, 'for the evidence of my professional attainments and for the very kind way in which it is conveyed'.[46] Porter was equally thrilled upon hearing of the appointment. In letters to Captain Luce, Porter returned to a common theme in their correspondence in the 1880s - corruption and gross incompetence among the officers who were tasked to advise the Secretary on naval matters. 'If you knew all the trouble to get [Hunt] to do things you would wonder at my patience', Porter wrote Luce in the wake of the Walker appointment. '[H]e has some bad fellows around him, regular Samson's who are willing to pull down the gates of Gaza even if it causes their own destruction in the end'.[47] Now that Walker's appointment to the most powerful bureau in the department was assured, Porter was confident that the deplorable situation would soon reverse itself, to the point of overstating his own influence on departmental affairs. '[I]n 10 days from now, Walker will be in the Bureau of Navigation and Detail and then I can have somebody at the Secretary's side to keep him posted in my absence. Everything then will then go right'.[48]

Porter's confident prediction would only be partially fulfilled. Walker was indeed a scrupulous reformer who proved quite adept at promoting the interests of the service over the parochial machinations of the Bureau chiefs.[49] Upon assuming his duties in Washington, Walker and his assistant in the Bureau - Lt. Commander Bowman H. McCalla of the *Powhatan* - quickly became members of the USNI, ordering an additional 50 subscriptions in 1882 for use by officers in the Bureau.[50] Under his careful direction, the Bureau of Navigation soon resembled an intellectual sanctuary for the brightest minds in the department, and his unconditional support for the Office of Naval Intelligence and the Naval War College - both founded under his purview at the Bureau - created the intellectual framework and hence the conditions favourable for the decisions of the 1889. Yet despite the instalment of a Porter protégé as a powerful Bureau chief, the senior Admiral was vastly mistaken if he thought Walker would serve as a mouthpiece for his own suspect agenda inside the department. Walker had his own ideas on naval reform, and they did not include his former mentor to any great extent. Porter would be made aware of this painful lesson soon enough.

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[45] Walker to Dewey, 11 March 1881. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.
[46] Walker to Hunt, 8 August 1881. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.
[47] Porter to Luce, 15 August 1881. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/ Reel #6.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Correspondence between Walker and subordinates attest to his scrupulous nature during his years in the Bureau of Navigation. See, in particular, Walker to J.H. Stevenson, 27 December 1883; and Walker to C.H. Lyman, 2 January 1886. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.
[50] See 'Annual Report of the Secretary', *USNIP*, Volume IX. (1883), p. xxi-xxii. The first time that Walker and McCalla were listed as members of the USNI was on 1 January 1882. It appears that both men became members shortly after their appointments to the Bureau of Navigation in October 1881. For more on McCalla, see Paolo E. Coletta, *Bowman Hendry McCalla: A Fighting Sailor*, (Washington 1979).

Walker and the Bureau of Navigation

Upon assuming his new duties in October 1881, Commodore Walker inherited the most expansive of the eight bureaus in the Navy Department, complete with the largest budget and contingent of officers assigned to it.[51] The Bureau of Navigation was originally created as the scientific bureau of the Navy Department.[52] As such, the new Bureau chief retained oversight of the Hydrographic Office, the Naval Observatory, the Nautical Almanac Office, and the Chief Signal Office. But Walker's power in the department was largely derived from the Office of Detail, which was transferred to the Bureau of Navigation in April 1865 to alleviate the overwhelming burden placed on the department secretary to issue routine orders to naval officers. Hence the bureau became known thereafter as the Bureau of Navigation and Detail. Walker had essentially inherited the power to assign naval officers to duties he thought they were most qualified for, sometimes with little regard for the seniority system that was supposed to govern such assignments. 'I do not believe in putting young men in positions that are set apart for men of higher rank', Walker once informed a colleague in 1885, 'but I do believe that where special duty requiring special knowledge, or special ability is to be done, that I believe the men best fitted for that work to do it without regard to their age'.[53] This prerogative would become particularly useful when the time came to staff the Office of Naval Intelligence and select the most qualified instructors for courses at the Naval War College.

Shortly after beginning work in the department, Walker was accorded another significant administrative prerogative that was likely sought by the new Bureau chief himself. Secretary Hunt directed on 28 November 1881 that all reports, letters and telegrams relating to the movement of vessels be forwarded to the Bureau of Navigation. In his capacity as Bureau chief, Walker was further directed to account for the movement of all naval vessels, and prepare orders and instructions to be issued on behalf of the Secretary. This new directive was issued to the commandants of navy yards, commanders of squadrons and commanding officers of ships and, as expected, it caused considerable friction within the senior officers corps.[54] Captain Walker, who was bestowed the temporary rank of Commodore as a Bureau chief, now exercised the authority to assign senior naval officers to squadrons while regulating the movement of the vessels under their command. It was an administrative prerogative that Walker did not hesitate to invoke. On one particular occasion in 1882, for example, Walker felt it necessary to remind a flag officer of the relative importance of squadron evolutions, with a emphasis on the proper course of steam

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[51] The other bureaus that comprised the Navy Department were: Yards and Docks, Equipment and Recruiting, Ordnance, Construction and Repair, Steam Engineering, Provisions and Clothing, and Medicine and Surgery. The eight bureaus were established by an Act of Congress in 1862.
[52] Henry P. Beers, 'The Bureau of Navigation, 1862-1942', *The American Archivist*, (October 1943), p. 212.
[53] Walker to Captain W.H. Kirkland, 5 August 1885. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.
[54] Beers, p. 220.

tactics. 'In battle everything would be done under steam, and prompt and exact handling of a single ship might win or lose a squadron action. In these days of rams and torpedo boats, an officer should know just what his ship will do and in order to learn, he must practice'.[55] While his letter was phrased more as informal advice from a junior officer than a stern reminder from a Bureau chief, Walker nonetheless ensured that the recipient of his correspondence knew exactly what was expected of him and the squadron of vessels under his command. 'I have no doubt of the great good coming from the present cruise, but I want to get all possible out of it'.[56]

Even his former mentor was not immune to the profound shift in power among the Bureaus of the Navy Department. The Bureau of Navigation was traditionally the strongest of the eight bureaus, but never before had departmental affairs been dominated by a single bureau chief, whose influence extended to critical personnel decisions as well as the movements of the fleet in peacetime. Admiral Porter discovered this new change in the internal dynamics of the department firsthand when he clashed with Captain Walker over the movements of the Training Squadron, currently under the command of Commodore Luce. Walker was insistent that all vessels fell within his purview, including those of the Training Squadron, while the senior Admiral attempted to argue that oversight for the training vessels should remain with him. That Porter was unsuccessful in overcoming a serious obstacle to reach the Secretary on this matter was captured in his numerous complaints to Luce, who remained neutral in the dispute between his two principal allies. 'It is impossible to find an opportunity to talk to him', Porter wrote Luce in November 1882.[57] 'When I go to his office he is so full of people to whom he gives precedence that I have no chance to open the subject of the apprentice squadron and if I write to him the letters are handed to Captain Walker and that's the way the matter stands'.[58] Conceding that 'Capt. W. is stronger than I am', Porter subsequently requested to be relieved of any responsibility for the Training Squadron.[59]

But there were indeed statutory limits to the powers of the new Bureau chief. As in the British system of naval administration, the civilian presence in the Navy Department was intended to reign supreme over its naval counterpart. Walker was thus subject to the whims of the civilian department secretary, whose discretion it was to countermand the actions of his predecessors. That is exactly what happened in April 1882, when Secretary Hunt was replaced in the wake of the assassination of President Garfield. In his place President Chester Arthur appointed William E. Chandler, a Republican from New Hampshire who had very little experience in naval matters.[60]

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[55] Walker to G.H. Cooper, 31 August 1882. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.
[56] Ibid. Emphasis in the original.
[57] Porter to Luce, 6 November 1882. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid. See also Porter to W. H. Chandler, 1 June 1883. RG 45/38/Vol. 29.
[60] Leon Burr Richardson, *William E. Chandler, Republican*, (New York 1940), pp. 281-285.

Similar to his predecessor, Chandler took a particular interest in naval reform, and was initially willing to afford Walker with the latitude to continue with the administrative scheme already in place in the department. Chandler even deferred to Walker as the Acting Secretary in his absence during the summer of 1882.

But the professional relationship between the two men rapidly deteriorated, as Chandler began to question the efficacy of the scheme in light of some evidence of discontent within the senior officer corps.[61] Finally, in October 1883, Chandler sought to return the Office of Detail back to the Secretary's Office. Walker viewed the move as the latest in an attempt to force his resignation, but instead of resigning, the Bureau chief responded by appealing to his powerful political connections. He informed Senator Allison, his brother-in-law, that "I am just now undergoing the process of being frozen out. Chandler, who I think likes me personally well enough, has evidently made up his mind to take from me one duty after another until he forces me to resign as Chief of a Bureau'.[62] Reluctantly, Walker prepared his resignation to Chandler, but an accommodation between the two men was made - apparently at the suggestion of Senator Allison - whereby Walker agreed to consult more closely with Chandler in the detailing process.[63]

Chandler eventually succeeded in returning the Office of Detail to his own office in October 1884, in spite of yet another appeal to Senator Allison from Walker, the Bureau chief observing that 'I don't know as there is any way of stopping it unless some pressure can be brought to bear upon him'.[64] The resolution imposed upon him was certainly viewed as a diminution of Walker's administrative prerogatives in the department, but it was only a temporary setback. In the first months of the Cleveland administration in 1885, Walker prepared an extensive memorandum that convinced Secretary William C. Whitney to return the Office of Detail back to the Bureau of Navigation.[65] In the meantime, Walker was obligated to consult with the other Bureau chiefs on personnel decisions, some of whom were quite jealous of Walker and the privileges afforded to the Bureau of Navigation. The antagonism between the Bureaus eventually boiled over in May 1884, when a concerted effort was made by the other Bureau chiefs to reallocate office space at the expense of the Bureau of Navigation. It was essentially a parochial dispute, but the overall

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[61] Chandler was informed of this discontent as early as May 1882. See C.A. Boutelle to William Chandler, 30 May 1882. Chandler Papers. LC/Container #53.
[62] Walker to Allison, 27 October 1883. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.
[63] On the preparation of his resignation, see Walker to Chandler, 27 October 1883. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1. The successful intervention of Sen. Allison was suggested in Wicks, 'New Navy and New Empire', pp. 82-83.
[64] Walker to Allison, 16 August 1884. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.
[65] See Beers, p. 21 and 'Informal Memorandum to the Secretary', 16 May 1885. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1. Whitney issued an executive order returning the Office of Detail to the Bureau of Navigation on 22 May 1885.

tone of the memoranda exchanged between the two sides suggests that more was at stake than just office space.[66]

No resolution of the office space dispute was ever made by the Secretary, although Chandler seemed to side with Walker on the issue.[67] Notwithstanding the friction over the Office of Detail, Walker was surprisingly able to accomplish much during the first years of Chandler's term as Navy Secretary. While his role in the formation of the Office of Naval Intelligence in 1882, and of the Naval War College in 1884, has largely been relegated to the footnotes to American naval history, Walker's timely support for both institutions in the 1880s was especially critical in a department consumed with parochial interests and power struggles. Aligning himself firmly with the service intellectuals he supported, Walker did not need to be convinced of the necessity of a naval intelligence function and of a postgraduate course for naval officers. And he did whatever he could to ensure that both institutions survived and prospered to the greatest extent possible. When B.F. Tracy announced his intention in November 1889 to design and build a fleet of battleships and cruisers along an offensive orientation, the aspiration of the new department secretary was not without a solid technological and intellectual foundation for strategic naval development. The Office of Naval Intelligence was the first instalment in a multi-step process of awakening naval officers, legislators and other interested parties to the prospects for American naval power, including its inherent value as effective instruments of power projection and deterrence given the rather complicated state of international relations.

THE FORMATION OF THE OFFICE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE

At a time when British naval organisation did not include a separate department for intelligence collection, analysis and dissemination, it is surprising to find that American naval officers were the first to remedy the void and establish an office for such a purpose in March 1882. While their British counterparts in the Admiralty were for years accustomed to receiving piecemeal intelligence generally from fleet movements and were thus slow to recognise the organisational imperative for a formalised intelligence function, the American perspective on naval intelligence was not hindered by alternative sources of information from abroad. Other than scientific endeavours, occasional visits to foreign dockyards and unexpected opportunities in the 1870s, intelligence collection for the American navy was an irregular and haphazard process with limited sources of information. American naval officers, particularly those attached to the Bureau of Navigation, were thus quick to embrace the concept of a formalised intelligence function, complete with a staff of talented young officers to procure a wealth of information on foreign naval capabilities and other topics of interest to the Navy Department.

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[66] Bureau Chiefs to Chandler, 5 May 1884; and Walker to Chandler, 13 May 1884. RG 45/32/Reel #32.
[67] See Bureau Chiefs to Chandler, 10 June 1884. RG 45/32/Reel #32.

Mason, Intelligence and the U.S. Naval Institute

Of those American naval officers credited with facilitating the formation of the Office of Naval Intelligence - hereafter known simply as O.N.I. - American naval historians generally refer to O.N.I as the brainchild of Lt. T.B.M. Mason, who was thereafter appointed its first chief intelligence officer.[68] Indeed, Mason's enthusiasm for intelligence matters can be traced to his duties while onboard the U.S.S. *Franklin*, then on station in 1870 with the European squadron and commanded by Captain (later Admiral) C.R.P. Rodgers. Rodgers detailed Mason and a few other junior officers to the task of collecting information on the naval organisation and capabilities of all the major European countries visited during the cruise. At the end of the cruise, in fact, Mason managed to obtain some leave in Europe so that he could learn more about foreign naval establishments, but his personal initiative was interrupted by orders to report for duty in the Hydrographic Office in Washington.[69] Rather than a diversion from his interest in foreign naval subjects, his new assignment afforded Mason with opportunities for further travel and study on hydrographic expeditions, some of which combined scientific exploration with economic and strategic analysis. This experience proved essential to the training of Mason and other future intelligence officers. 'Indeed every important naval intelligence agent between 1882 and 1918 served at one time or other on these missions, while four Navy hydrographers became chief intelligence officers', writes Jeffrey Dorwart in his seminal study of American naval intelligence during this period.[70] 'This intimate relationship between scientific endeavor and early naval intelligence accounted partly for the scholarly, research-oriented nature of the first generation of naval intelligence operatives'.[71]

Multilingual with a scholarly disposition, Lt. Mason certainly qualified as one of a select group of talented service intellectuals and naval practitioners, most of whom were desirous of naval reform and active members of the USNI. Mason was unquestionably the most outspoken of the latest generation of naval officers to graduate from Annapolis in 1868 or later. In a show of confidence in his abilities and commitment to the primary aims of the voluntary organisation, Mason was elected in 1877 to the executive committee of the institute, serving in that post concurrently with his appointment as an instructor of naval gunnery and infantry tactics at Annapolis. In the former capacity, Mason no doubt became personally acquainted with the perspectives of his fellow institute members and faculty instructors, which at the time included Lt.

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[68] See, for example Jeffrey M. Dorwart, *The Office of Naval Intelligence: The Birth of America's First Intelligence Agency*, (Annapolis 1979). A more recent account can be found in Wyman H. Packard, *A Century of Naval Intelligence*, (Washington 1996).
[69] J.M. Ellicott, 'Theodorus Bailey Meyers Mason: Founder of the Office of Naval Intelligence', *USNIP*, (March 1952), pp. 265-266.
[70] Dorwart, p. 5.
[71] Ibid.

Commander William T. Sampson, Professor James Soley and later Commander A.T. Mahan. Likewise, Mason was afforded an opportunity to expound on his previously exhibited interest in intelligence matters among other topics. He continued to write prolifically on a number of naval subjects, contributing lectures and critical essays for both the *Proceedings* and *The United Service*, the latter a new military journal that actually paid for the submissions of articles.

Mason's first overt reference to an intelligence function was reserved for an article published in *The United Service* in April 1879. In the absence of an 'intelligence bureau' in the Navy Department, Mason suggested that the USNI should serve as 'the bureau of information for the navy'.[72] He encouraged his fellow naval officers, especially those assigned to foreign stations, to seek out opportunities to study the latest advances in foreign naval technology, perform their own scientific investigations of new designs, patents and inventions, and submit their conclusions for consideration by the institute and the subscribers to the *Proceedings*. Toward this end, Mason was hopeful that the USNI would receive some sort of official recognition from the Department, in a manner similar to the relationship between the Admiralty and the Royal United Services Institute in London. 'The English Admiralty offers every inducement and facility to [RUSI]', explained Mason, 'which is really semi-official in its nature; the facilities are sometimes substantial in their form, consisting of models, descriptions, official publications and data'.[73] The institute could benefit from a such arrangement, as its members and the senior officers corps at large must be kept apprised of foreign naval developments. Until such an arrangement was even contemplated by the Department, however, Mason urged his fellow members to 'constitute a sort of mutual learning company' and function essentially as an *ad hoc* intelligence department.[74] Writing as if the institute was in fact a voluntary intelligence organisation, Mason argued that the USNI was an underutilised resource that, if afforded the opportunity, official recognition and adequate supervision, could effectively ensure the collection, analysis and dissemination of foreign naval intelligence.

> The intelligence department has been hampered by the fact that no one has the time or opportunity to take charge of it, and the bureaux and other officers do not furnish their information. It is hoped that soon the thing may be presented to our honorable Secretary by our President [of the Institute] in such a light that he may authorize or even direct the Bureaux to furnish the necessary information. An officer might be detailed to direct this department, so necessary for the education of the officers of the service, or, at any rate, the society might make it an object to some retired officer to become its permanent Secretary, as is the case with the Royal United Services Institute.[75]

With Secretary Richard W. Thompson and his Bureau chiefs struggling to defend the Department against recurring charges of corruption and gross negligence, some of which were

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[72] T.B.M. Mason, 'The United States Naval Institute', *The United Service*, Vol. 1 (1879), p. 295.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.

indeed warranted, Mason must have surmised that his overture for an 'intelligence bureau' would fall on deaf ears and thus fail to attract the critical support necessary for such an innovation in naval administration.[76] Quite possibly Mason's idea was rejected because Thompson was satisfied with current intelligence collection activities.[77] For the next three years, Mason reprised his role as a fleet intelligence officer, when Admiral Rodgers was appointed in 1879 to command the Pacific Squadron and requested Mason to accompany him to the U.S.S. *Pensacola* as his Flag-Lieutenant.[78] Serving onboard the squadron flagship, Mason collected naval intelligence on each major country visited. The highlight of the cruise for Mason was an opportunity to observe and report on the naval actions of the Pacific War of 1879-1881, pitting Chile against Peru and Bolivia. On one particular occasion, Mason and an intelligence team that included Lt. J.F. Meigs and Lt. Royal Ingersoll were given permission by Chilean officials to inspect the damage inflicted on the *Huascar*, a Peruvian ironclad that was captured after a bitter fight with the Chilean ironclads *Almirante Cochrane* and *Blanco Enclada*.[79] Following the advice echoed by Mason back in April 1879, their observations were promptly forwarded to their fellow USNI members back at Annapolis, and shortly thereafter articles appeared in both the *Proceedings* and *The United Service*.[80]

The Intelligence Function and the Bureau of Navigation

Yet despite his best efforts in support of a formalised arrangement for intelligence collection, analysis and dissemination, Mason remained unsuccessful in formalising the intelligence process within the Navy Department. Upon completion of his duties with the Pacific Squadron, Mason reluctantly returned to the Naval Academy in late 1881 as an instructor and allegedly brooded over the matter.[81] Eventually, in a span of only six months, Mason was unexpectedly summoned to the Department to explain his views, and within weeks was assigned to the Bureau of Navigation so that he could assist in the formation of what ultimately became O.N.I. To assist him in this final lobbying effort was Lt. Commander Bowman McCalla, Walker's assistant in the Bureau of Navigation who developed a independent interest in naval intelligence after reading the lecture given by the British strategist Captain J.C.R. Colomb on the subject at RUSI in May

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[75] Ibid., p. 296.
[76] For more on the naval scandals of the 1870s, see Charles Oscar Paullin, 'A Half Century of Naval Administration in America, 1861-1911', *USNIP*, (December 1922), pp. 1228-1230.
[77] Dorwart, p. 8-10.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] See J.F. Meigs, 'The War in South America', *USNIP*, Vol. V (1879), pp. 461-479; T.B.M. Mason, 'The War Between Chile, Peru and Bolivia', *The United Service*, Vol. II (May 1880), pp. 553-574; and T.B.M. Mason and R.R. Ingersoll, 'The Capture of Peruvian Monitor Ram "Huascar" by the Chilean Squadron, October 8, 1879', *The United Service*, Vol. III (October 1880), pp. 396-409.
[81] Dorwart, p. 13.

1881.[82] 'I had been much impressed with his views and practical suggestions', McCalla later recalled in his unpublished memoirs, 'recognizing what an important part of an Admiralty, or of a Navy Department, such a branch might prove itself to be'.[83] Several months later, McCalla discussed the subject with Mason during a visit to the Naval Academy, after which he immediately recommended to Walker that Mason's proposal for an intelligence department be implemented.[84] The Bureau chief was quite amenable to the proposal, for Walker believed that the Navy Department could benefit from a systematic method of collecting and filing information about foreign naval developments, especially in the event of war.[85] Walker promptly drafted the order establishing the new department within the Bureau of Navigation, which in turn was signed by Secretary Hunt on 23 March 1882.[86]

Between April and June 1882, the effort to organise and staff the newly established department stalled temporarily, as President Arthur replaced Secretary Hunt on 17 April 1882 with William Chandler. It was now left to Chandler to reaffirm the directive of his predecessor and, following a meeting with Mason in his office, Chandler assented to the creation of O.N.I. Mason reported to the Bureau of Navigation on 15 June 1882, whereupon Walker assigned him to be the first chief intelligence officer. Since direct funding of the new department was impossible without congressional action, Walker sustained the formative activities of O.N.I through funding and other resources allocated to his Bureau.[87] He initially assigned three officers to assist Mason, all of whom were already assigned to the Bureau of Navigation.[88] Clerks employed by the Bureau were also borrowed from the other offices within his purview, and office space was made readily available for the intelligence officers in the new State, War, and Navy Building. In subsequent years, Walker sought congressional recognition of O.N.I., and with it a coveted budgetary allocation to support and even increase the activities of the intelligence office. His efforts in this regard proved unsuccessful; congressional recognition and direct funding of O.N.I. would not be approved until 1900.[89] Walker was thus compelled to continue siphoning funds from other sources within the Department. In short, the Bureau chief displayed considerable enthusiasm for the new institution, as reflected in both his efforts to sustain it with existing resources as well as in the words chosen to stress the important reasons for its creation. 'An Office of Naval Intelligence', explained Walker in his annual report outlining his bureau's activities in 1882, 'now generally recognized as necessary to the effectiveness of an Army or Navy... has been organized

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[82] Captain J.C.R. Colomb, 'Naval Intelligence and Protection of Commerce in War', *RUSI Journal* (1881).
[83] Bowman H. McCalla, 'Memoirs of a Naval Career'. (Washington 1910), pp. 17-18.
[84] Ibid., p. 18.
[85] Walker to Charles B. Sigby, 19 June 1902. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #2.
[86] *General Order No. 292*, 23 March 1882. Reprinted in Packard, p. 2.
[87] Packard, p. 2-3.
[88] A.G. Berry, 'The Beginning of the Office of Naval Intelligence', *USNIP* (January 1937), p. 102.
[89] Packard, p. 4

for the purpose of systematizing the collection and classification of information for the use of the Department, in relation to the strength and resources of foreign navies'.[90]

Mason, meanwhile, sought to define the scope of tasks and activities to be undertaken by the officers under his direction. In a letter probably drafted by Mason himself, Secretary Chandler outlined 14 independent categories of information to be collected by O.N.I., including not only intelligence on foreign naval developments but also information on American naval capabilities, coastal defence and fortifications, the mercantile marine, and other subjects that may be useful to naval officers in their professional studies.[91] Naval attaches assigned to foreign legations were expected to assist in the all important task of collecting information on foreign naval developments, the first of whom - Commander French E. Chadwick - had already received orders to report to the U.S. legation in London.[92] The Secretary, moreover, expected O.N.I to publish monthly bulletins to serve as a reference for the junior and senior officer corps, the contents of which were to include original articles submitted by naval officers. 'The younger officers of the service', wrote Chandler on 25 July 1882, 'will be encouraged in collecting and reporting intelligence and in writing articles on naval subjects'.[93] Finally, and most importantly, Chandler granted permission for Mason to avail himself of the facilities and resources of the USNI, precisely the informal arrangement that Mason had advocated since April 1879. 'The United States Naval Institute, a voluntary organization of the officers of the Navy for the purpose of facilitating study, will be encouraged by a contribution of such matter as may be thought proper from time to time'.[94]

An Intellectual Sanctuary in the Navy Department

Anticipating the technical intelligence requirements of his expected consumers within the Department, Mason organised his office according to functional rather than geographical areas of interest.[95] Intelligence collection efforts in the 1880s were focused largely on foreign technical information - in the form of warship and machinery designs, blueprints and design specifications - so as to overcome the technological obstacles to naval and strategic modernisation. This proved to be an enormous task that could not have been accomplished without an expanded complement of staff officers assigned to O.N.I. Fortunately for Mason and his successor, Lt. R.P. Rodgers, shortages in talented staff officers were never viewed as a serious organisational impediment to O.N.I. From 1886 to 1897, O.N.I. was continually staffed by an average of ten officers, which

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[90] *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1882*, (Washington 1883), pp. 107-8.
[91] Chandler to Mason, 25 July 1882. RG 45/17/12.
[92] Chandler to French E. Chadwick, 12 July 1882. RG 45/17/12.
[93] Chandler to Mason, 25 July 1882. RG 45/17/12.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Packard, p. 3.

was a rather large staff complement for an office in the Navy Department.[96] As the self-appointed patron of the new institution, moreover, Walker ensured that the staff complement increased not only in terms of quantity but also in quality. This was consistent with a departmental mandate, inspired by Mason at the outset, that 'only such officers as have shown an aptitude for intelligence staff work or who by their intelligence and knowledge of foreign languages and drawing give promise of such aptitude, should be employed'.[97] Toward this end, O.N.I. was staffed with the best and brightest among the junior officer corps. When including some of the officers directly employed by Walker, O.N.I. and the Bureau of Navigation constituted a sort of intellectual sanctuary among a strong anti-intellectual element in the Navy Department.

The most accomplished of these officers were also active members of the USNI and frequent contributors to the *Proceedings* in the 1880s. Among them were Mason, Raymond P. Rodgers, Richard Wainwright, William Bainbridge-Hoff, Charles C. Rogers, Sidney A. Staunton, William L. Rodgers, Seaton Schroeder, Washington I. Chambers and Carlos Calkins. In addition to their official duties, these officers also lectured and wrote critical essays that further inspired aspirations for American naval and strategic modernisation. Both Mason and his successor Rodgers strongly encouraged their intelligence staff officers to contribute articles to the *Proceedings*. Throughout this period, their names appeared repeatedly in the table of contents that preceded each issue of the journal. The most thought-provoking submissions were reserved for the annual essay contest sponsored by the USNI, the topics of which were prescribed by the executive committee.

Between 1882 and 1900, in fact, ten of the fifteen first-prize essayists were intelligence staff officers. Calkins, for example, received the coveted first-prize on two occasions, the first in 1883 for an essay that considered functional specialisation within the officer corps.[98] His second essay, for which he was awarded first-prize in 1886, suggested improvements in naval organisation and training in steam tactics.[99] Similarly, Chambers received the award in 1884 for a provocative essay that recommended a set of policy prescriptions for naval modernisation.[100] Aside from the literary efforts of Calkins and Chambers, there were other submissions from current and future intelligence officers that also received special recognition from the judges. Wainwright received an honourable mention in 1882 for an essay that examined the revival of the American merchant marine. Schroeder also received an honourable mention in 1881 for an essay that outlined the

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[96] Ibid. p. 5.
[97] Chandler to Mason, 25 July 1882. RG 45/17/12.
[98] Carlos Calkins, 'How May the Sphere of Usefulness of Naval Officers Be Extended in Time of Peace with Advantage to the Country and the Naval Service', *USNIP*, Vol. IX (1883), pp. 155-194.
[99] Carlos Calkins, 'What Changes in Organization and Drill are Necessary to Sail and Fight Effectively Our War Ships of Latest Type?', *USNIP*, Vol. XII (1886), pp. 269-360.

elements of a prospective shipbuilding policy.[101] Thus, as a result of these and other submissions from intelligence officers, the informal partnership between O.N.I. and the Institute during this period imparted 'a tremendous spiritual and intellectual driving force to the growth of the Navy, not only by stimulating and encouraging thought and writing but also by furnishing the equally important means of publication, distribution and discussion'.[102]

Historical Awareness in Naval Intelligence

The literary efforts above infer the challenging demands and expectations of the officers selected by the Bureau of Navigation for assignment to O.N.I. In their official capacities, intelligence officers such as Rogers, Chambers and Schroeder concerned themselves mainly with the collection of foreign naval intelligence, the translation of foreign technical journals, and the compilation of reports and articles for internal publication and distribution. Meanwhile, in their unofficial capacities as active members of the USNI, these same officers were also involved in discussions of contemporary policy issues, writing timely and often provocative articles for publication in the *Proceedings*. Yet there was also an element of historical awareness within O.N.I. that factored into the analytical progress of intelligence staff officers, in both their official and unofficial capacities. This no doubt was fostered by the Office of Naval Records and Library, which was created along with O.N.I and attached to the new intelligence office by the same general order issued by Secretary Hunt in March 1882.[103] Appointed to head this new office was James Russell Soley, the well-respected professor of mathematics at the Naval Academy whose emerging passion for naval history rivalled an interest in his chosen discipline. Soley, who believed that history, like mathematics, 'widens the scope of man's observation and interest', was the most logical choice for the position.[104] His rare combination of talents more than qualified him to serve in the role of archivist, librarian and naval historian, all of which were required as he slowly compiled an impressive collection of naval prints, photographs, and a 7,000-volume library for use by officers in the Navy Department. Soley also attempted to collect, catalogue and preserve American naval records for the purpose of future historical research and analysis. To assist him in this endeavour, Congress authorised in 1884 a small appropriation of $5,000 to ensure that the Office of Naval Records and Library was equipped for the enormous task of

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[100] Washington I. Chambers, 'The Reconstruction and Increase of the Navy', *USNIP*, Vol. XI. (1885), pp. 3-83.

[101] Seaton Schroeder, 'The Type of (1) Armored Vessel, (II) Cruiser Best Suited to the Present Needs of the United States', *USNIP*, Vol. VII (1881), pp. 43-84. Interestingly enough, all four of these officers would be promoted to flag rank and recognized for their contributions to American naval thought in the 1890s and 1900s. Wainwright and Schroeder, in particular, were later appointed to head O.N.I in 1897-1898 and 1903-1906 respectively.

[102] Ellery H. Clark, 'The Significance of the Prize Essay Contest, 1879-1950', *USNIP*, (August 1951), p. 799.

[103] *General Order No. 292*, 23 March 1882. Reprinted in Packard, p. 2.

[104] See J.R. Soley's comments in 'Discussion of Prize Essay of 1883', *USNIP*, Vol. X (1884), p. 259.

publishing documents related to the naval operations of the Civil War.[105] It was a task that would occupy most of his time until 1890, when Secretary B.F. Tracy revived the post of Assistant Secretary of the Navy and appointed Soley to occupy it throughout the remainder of his administration.

Soley's presence in the Navy Department during the 1880s has generally remained on the periphery of American naval history, not because his individual contributions were considered unworthy of comment, but rather from the subtle nature of his work in the Office of Naval Records and Library during the 1880s. There is, however, little doubt that Soley shared a common intellectual interest with his colleagues in O.N.I. The common linkages to Soley and the intelligence officers extended not only to their shared offices in the State-War-Navy Building, but also their identities as USNI members. Their proximity to Soley and his professional endeavours, moreover, further refined the emerging relationship between historical analysis and strategic formulation in the Navy Department, which would later serve as the underlying basis of the core curriculum at the U.S. Naval War College. 'The location of this early work close to the work of intelligence compilation created a link in the approach and concern of both enterprises', observed John Hattendorf in describing the intellectual prospects for strategy development in the 1880s.[106] 'Intelligence officers seemed to become increasingly interested in historical insight while the historical work was kept specifically on the professional and service aspects of the topic'.[107] It is thus of little surprise to find that the adjunct faculty of the new college consisted primarily of Soley and a stable of intelligence staff officers during the formative years of the college, on loan temporarily from O.N.I. so that they could assist their institutional partner in encouraging the development of American naval thought.

THE WAR COLLEGE AND THE ORIGINS OF A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

If the published record of the U.S. Naval Institute provided a forum for O.N.I. staff officers to explore strategic and other policy-related aspects of naval modernisation, their distractions from their regular duties were no doubt heightened by the establishment in 1884 of the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. Although the initial concept for an innovative postgraduate course for naval officers was the brainchild of Stephen Luce, the college most likely would have remained a half-developed concept in the 1880s if not for the critical support of Commodore Walker and the Bureau of Navigation. In fact, most accounts of the formative years of the Naval War College either completely overlook or obscure the contributions of Walker as a staunch

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[105] John B. Hattendorf, B. Mitchell Simpson III, and John R. Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars: The Centennial History of the U.S. Naval War College*, (Newport 1984), pp. 7-8.
[106] Ibid., p. 8.
[107] Ibid.

advocate of the college throughout his two tours in the Navy Department.[108] As the most powerful Bureau chief in the department, Walker was able to champion Luce's ideas over the strenuous objections of the other line Bureau chiefs. When the college was finally ordered into existence in 1884, Walker ensured the prosperity of the young institution through an affiliation with the Bureau of Navigation, which at the time resembled an intellectual sanctuary for officers that would soon divide their time between Newport and Washington. Finally, and most importantly, Walker ordered Mahan to Newport at the suggestion of Luce, and even protected him to the best of his ability when the college was threatened with closure and finally consolidated with the Naval Torpedo School in January 1889.

In short, the founding of the Naval War College in 1884 was not the result of an individual crusade on the part of Stephen Luce, but a concerted effort among a minority of service intellectuals and practitioners who recognised the potential for such an institution and a core curriculum to explore the topics of naval strategy, tactics and history – the conceptual elements of a future strategic framework. This section will begin to highlight the contributions of these naval officers during the college's formative years, all of whom were active members of the USNI and who shared common ideas about naval reform as well as the requirements for a mature and multifaceted American naval force. Luce was certainly at the forefront of these efforts in the 1880s, however, and any account of this sort must legitimately begin with him.

Stephen Luce and the Initial Concept for the War College

The idea for a postgraduate course for naval officers originated within the mind of an officer who was both an accomplished educator of midshipman and apprentices, as well as a keen student of naval history and warfare. Throughout most of his career, Stephen Luce was in some capacity affiliated with the system of naval education in the United States. He was first assigned to the U.S. Naval Academy as an instructor of gunnery and seamanship in March 1860, and would remain there throughout most of the Civil War. Returning to the academy in 1865 after a brief absence due to the conflict, Luce was soon appointed Commandant of Midshipman under the direction of Admiral Porter. His departure from the academy in 1868 marked the beginning of period where Luce frequently alternated between shore assignments and commanding vessels at sea. In either venue, Luce was largely occupied in the 1870s with ideas to improve the education and training of naval apprentices and enlisted personnel. Eventually, his efforts in this regard expanded to include postgraduate studies for naval officers, and in the late 1870s Luce first envisioned the establishment of a postgraduate school for such a purpose.[109]

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[108] Three notable exceptions are Wicks, 'New Navy and New Empire'; Gleaves, 'Life and Letters of Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce'; and Ronald Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession*, (Newport 1977).
[109] Gleaves, pp. 168-171.

It is difficult to determine exactly when Luce conceived of his idea for a postgraduate course for naval officers. His correspondence during the mid-1870s indicates that the curriculum for such a school actually preceded any formal discussion of the school itself. During this period, Luce became particularly interested in the study of naval history as a source of instruction in the areas of naval strategy and tactics. In this regard he was greatly influenced by the writings of John Knox Laughton, the British naval historian and pioneer naval educator who at time was developing his own thesis on the scientific study of naval history. Laughton and Luce first met in September 1870 at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in London, and the discussions between the educators allegedly focused on the usage of historical themes in naval education.[110] Following his encounter with Laughton, Luce eventually returned to the States in July 1872, whereupon he immediately requested assignment at the Naval Torpedo Station at Newport - the closest approximation to a postgraduate course for naval officers. The request was promptly denied. 'The Department cannot conceive a proper discipline as likely to exist where a junior officer is the instructor, and therefore declines to order you as requested'.[111]

Luce instead was assigned to the Boston Navy Yard as an equipment officer, where he would remain until 1875. Aside from renewing his interest in the training system, Luce embarked on his own exploration of naval history. In this endeavour he consulted Laughton, and the two men began to exchange correspondence and papers as early as 1875. Luce had much to learn from and admire about the British naval historian, especially his mastery of facts painstakingly documented through archival research. Their first exchange of correspondence, in fact, involved a request from Luce to verify certain facts before writing an article on 'The Sovereignty of the Sea' that subsequently appeared in *Potter's American Monthly* in November 1876.[112] Laughton, meanwhile, was more than willing to guide Luce through the scientific study of naval history, at one point recommending to the American that he consult some of his earlier writings. It was a needless suggestion, for Luce had already read most of the articles, including those dating back to the years when Laughton himself was an aspiring naval historian at the Royal Naval College, Portsmouth, based onboard the Gunnery Training Ship H.M.S. *Excellent* (1866-73).[113]

That Laughton should receive some credit for shaping the underlying curriculum for the Naval War College was evident years later, when Luce delivered two thought-provoking lectures to the

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[110] Andrew.D. Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History: John Knox Laughton, the Royal Navy, and the Historical Profession*, (London 1998), p. 30.
[111] Navy Department to Luce, 16 July 1872. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #5.
[112] J.K. Laughton to Luce, 9 July 1875. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #5. See also John D. Hayes and John B. Hattendorf, (eds), *The Writings of Stephen B. Luce*, (Newport 1975) for a annotated bibliography of Luce's writings.
[113] Laughton to Luce, 10 August 1875. Luce papers. Luce noted with his own hand which articles he had already read.

officers beginning the course at the college in September 1886. The first of these lectures delved into core foundation of the curriculum - the study of naval warfare as a science - which, when compared with the teachings of Laughton, was an adaptation of the ideas developed originally by the British naval historian in the 1870s. Luce's remarks on the usage of naval history was particularly insightful in this regard: '[T]here is no question that the naval battles of the past furnish a mass of facts sufficient for the formulation of laws or principles which, once established, would raise maritime war to the level of a science'.[114] While Luce did not refer to Laughton by name during the course of his first lecture, the British naval historian was indeed credited by Luce in the subsequent lecture devoted to the study of naval history. Here, as well as in the prior lecture, Luce was equally consistent with the views expounded by Professor Laughton. 'It is by the knowledge derived from the history of naval battles', Luce reminded his audience, 'that we will be enabled to establish a number of facts on which to generalize and formulate those principles which are to constitute the groundwork of our new science'.[115] More importantly, Luce for the first time acknowledged the writings and teaching of Laughton to whom, in the words of his American student, 'we are indebted for many valuable lessons'.[116]

The initial concept of a naval postgraduate school, complete with a faculty of military and naval officers to teach this curriculum - seems to have originated in the late 1870s. American naval historians generally refer to his visit in 1877 to the Artillery School at Fort Monroe, Virginia, as a defining experience for Luce and his concept for an advanced course in naval warfare.[117] The Artillery School owed its existence to Brigadier General Emory Upton, who at the time of Luce's visit was the commanding officer of the school. Upton certainly inspired Luce to forward a similar scheme for naval officers, for shortly after his visit Luce recommended the idea to Secretary Richard W. Thompson. 'The leading feature of the postgraduate course would be the carrying of the young officers through a course of instruction in the Art of War', Luce wrote to Thompson in August 1877.[118] His overture to the department secretary was unsuccessful, despite his best efforts to convince Thompson that such a school was an absolute necessity in light of new technological applications in naval warfare.

> The introduction of steam and the telegraph enabling military operations both on land and at sea to be conducted with great rapidity, and shortening to months great campaigns which had in times past consumed years, renders it absolutely necessary that to be a successful naval captain of the present day an officer must be a strategist as well as a tactician.[119]

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[114] Stephen Luce, 'On the Study of Naval Warfare as a Science', *USNIP*, Vol. XII (1886), p. 531.
[115] Stephen Luce, 'On the Study of Naval History', *USNIP*, Vol. XIII (1887), p. 178.
[116] Ibid., p. 187.
[117] Hattendorf et al., p. 16; and Spector, pp. 17-18.
[118] Luce to Thompson, 8 August 1877. Reprinted in Gleaves, p. 169.
[119] Ibid.

Luce's next attempt to interest the Navy Department in a postgraduate school yielded similar results. In November 1882, he broached the subject with Secretary Chandler, who had only been in the department under 7 months, less the extended vacation he took the previous summer. Luce suggested to the inexperienced department secretary that he establish a naval school for 'the higher branches of the naval profession: the science of war, naval tactics, military and naval history, international law, military and naval law, modern languages, and such elective branches as might be found desirable'.[120] This time, however, Luce appears to have enlisted the support of Admiral Porter who, upon hearing of the idea immediately offered to 'write as strong a letter as I can to deliver in person to the Secretary when he returns'.[121] But even Porter doubted whether his overture would have any effect on the often absent Chandler. 'If I sent it in now, it would go into the pigeon hole and will probably go there anyhow!'.[122] Whether the letters evoked any reaction from Chandler is unknown, but the war school was certainly not viewed as a priority for the secretary. The half-developed concept was destined to languish in the department for another year. It must have occurred to Luce then that the war school project required another strong voice of support, preferably a naval officer and department insider who could champion the idea among sceptical colleagues. The logical choice was Commodore Walker, the most powerful and influential naval officer to reside in the Navy Department during the 1880s.

Support for the War College in the Navy Department

The historical record is imprecise as to when exactly Walker offered his support to Luce for the war school project. Most likely Walker learned of it when Luce first broached the subject with Chandler in November 1882. While he approved of the idea, Walker initially believed that such a school should be located in Annapolis, where facilities were already available to accommodate the institution.[123] Luce was adamant that the school should be located on Coasters Harbor Island in Newport, and his arguments to that effect were persuasive enough to convince Walker not only to support the institution itself but also the proposed location for it.[124]

Walker's support for the war school was critical in March 1884, following another attempt by Luce to persuade Secretary Chandler of the absolute necessity for a postgraduate course and school for naval officers. This time, however, Walker intervened and convinced the Secretary to order Luce to Washington so that he could further explain his proposal in person. Luce was subsequently afforded an audience in the Department, consisting of not only Chandler but also

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[120] Luce to Chandler, 8 November 1882. RG 45/38/Vol. 28.
[121] Porter to Luce, 6 November 1882. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Luce to Nelson Aldrich, 7 December 1883. Aldrich Papers. LC/MD/Reel #11.
[124] For more on this point, see Anthony S. Nicolosi, 'The Navy, Newport, and Stephen B. Luce', *Naval War College Review*, (October 1984), pp. 117-131.

Walker and the rest of the line Bureau chiefs.[125] The outcome of the conference seemed to cast further doubt on the prospects for the war school, for it failed to secure support from the other bureaus. According to Luce, the bureau chiefs reacted 'not very favourably, and in particular Capt. Sicard treated it in a manner bordering on derision'.[126] Luce would later add Commodore Winfield S. Schley to the list of bureau chiefs who opposed the war school project. Recently appointed as Chief of the Bureau of Equipment & Recruiting, both Schley and Sicard were opposed to the project more out of concern for their parochial interests in the Department. 'They seem to fear that that it will clash with their interests here', Luce complained to Senator Nelson Aldrich of Rhode Island.[127] 'They are mistaken, but still they refuse to be persuaded. At any rate their opposition is a serious obstacle for success, for they must have more or less influence with the Secretary'.[128]

But Walker's support was all that was necessary to shelter the proposal from its opponents in the Department. After consulting with the Secretary, Walker on 3 May 1884 ordered that a board of inquiry be convened to fully consider the idea of a naval postgraduate school, the best location for such a school, and the subjects to be included in its curriculum.[129] Aside from Luce, whose views on the war school were well known, Walker appointed Commanders C.F. Goodrich and W.T. Sampson to conduct the inquiry. The conclusions of the board were essentially preordained, as all three naval officers were accomplished naval educators, active members and future presidents of the USNI, and deeply respected for their intellectual and technical faculties. Goodrich, in fact, was an original member of the USNI and a frequent contributor to the *Proceedings*, where his prize-winning essay on the general subject of naval education was published in 1879.[130] Aside from his articles and service on the faculty at Annapolis, Goodrich was best known for his official report on the British military and naval campaign off Alexandria in 1882. He was personally selected for this assignment by Walker himself.[131]

The credentials of Goodrich's counterpart were equally impressive. Before achieving widespread fame in the Spanish-American War in 1898, Sampson was known more for his intellectual acumen than his service at sea. Goodrich once referred to his friend as 'the most brilliant officer of his time'.[132] It was indeed an accurate depiction of Sampson, who was well regarded for his capacities as an instructor in the classroom at Annapolis. Between 1868 and

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[125] Spector, p. 23
[126] Luce to Chandler, 21 February 1905. Quoted in Leon Burr Richardson, *William E. Chandler, Republican*, (New York 1940), p. 307.
[127] Luce to Aldrich, 17 January 1885. Aldrich Papers. LC/MD/Reel #13.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Walker to Luce, 3 May 1884. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel # 6.
[130] Caspar F. Goodrich, 'Naval Education', *USNIP*, Vol. V (1879), pp. 324-344.
[131] Walker to Goodrich, 29 August 1882. RG 45/17/12.
[132] Caspar F. Goodrich, *Rope Yarns from the Old Navy*, (New York 1921), p. 23.

1878, in fact, Sampson spent some eight years at the academy, first as a physics instructor and later a department head. 'Characteristic of the man and his methods', wrote the American naval historian Allan Westcott, 'were his academy lectures, delivered quietly but with great clearness, and with such painstaking attention to detail that in his illustrative experiments a former student could "not recall a single failure"'.[133] His commitment to naval education was ultimately recognised in 1886, when Walker appointed him Superintendent of his beloved institution. It was a post that he would not vacate until 1890. In short, the orders for Goodrich and Sampson to report to Luce on this matter was part of a carefully orchestrated effort by Walker to ensure the outcome of the board of inquiry. But gaining approval for the war college was only one of the results obtained during the deliberations of the three officers. Included among their recommendations to the Secretary were the elements of a new strategic framework that in time would be refined and eventually adopted by the decisions of 1889.

The Core Curriculum: Elements of a Strategic Framework

The board of inquiry submitted its report to Chandler on 13 June 1884, in which it predictably concluded that a postgraduate school for naval officers be immediately established in Newport, consistent in almost every detail with the proposal laid out by Luce only months before.[134] The three naval officers strongly urged that the practitioners of their chosen profession should be encouraged, and even required to study the various problems of naval warfare through the analytic lens of the scientist. The war school was intended to stimulate intellectual development and increased knowledge among the naval officers selected to attend, so that they would be adequately prepared if and when the civilian policymakers ever authorised the construction of a modern battlefleet. While it was the explicit prerogative of these policymakers to brush the broad strokes of American naval policy, the overarching mandate of the war school was to further advance the naval profession and with it the professional development of *first-class* naval force. This was impossible so long as naval officers failed to appreciate the full potential of naval power in warfare, while at the same time congressional leaders failed to formulate a coherent policy that would inform them as to their proper roles and missions with the limited resources available. The war school was intended to remedy the knowledge gap, but it was the responsibility of Congress to provide the battleships and cruisers to accompany strategic naval development:

> The almost total absence of an adequate naval force adds to the burden of responsibility imposed upon our naval officers, and imperatively demands of them extraordinary exertion in the acquisition of professional knowledge in order to make such amends, as they best may, for the extreme paucity of the means furnished them. Here, then, is not

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[133]Dumas Malone, (ed), *Dictionary of American Biography*, Volume VIII, (New York 1963), pp. 321-323. Entry written by Allan Westcott.

[134] *Report of Board on a Postgraduate Course*, 13 June 1884. RG 45/38/30.

> simply a 'reason', but an absolute necessity for the establishment of such a school as the order contemplates.[135]

While the above report did not elaborate on what exactly was to be taught and who was prepared to teach it, the specific details of the course of studies were provided in a subsequent memorandum to the Secretary in July 1884.[136] At the institution that was now to be referred to as the 'Naval War College', a faculty composed mostly of naval officers was anticipated to develop and teach a host of courses in a number of subject areas. Luce, Goodrich and Sampson listed these courses by name - Military Campaigns, Strategy and Tactics, International Law, Rules of Evidence and Modern Political History. But their efforts were clearly focused on developing three courses that would constitute the core curriculum at the college and hence the basic ingredients to strategic policy formulation along an *offensive* orientation. Their collective ambition for American naval power in the future was reflected in their expectations for each course:

> Naval Strategy - The disposition of a naval force for the protection of a coast or convoy - for the attack of an enemy's coast or fleet - for the destruction of an enemy's commerce - plans of naval campaigns - bases of operation - coaling stations and other supplying depots - analyses of naval campaigns - vulnerable points of an enemy's defence - practicable landing places in the neighborhood of strategic points - naval transport - defence of landing points on our coast - a study of the time required for any nation or probable combination of nations to concentrate a given force upon our own coast - their means of subsistence and probable point or points of attack and the means of defence to be employed in each case - etc. etc.
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> Naval Tactics - The handling of a single vessel, squadron or fleet in the presence of an enemy - orders of battle - turning times - tactical circles - time and space required to change front or perform other evolutions of a fleet or vessel - disposition of the vessels of a fleet to secure most effective use of each class of weapon - relative value and limiting conditions of the gun, ram and torpedo - study of the best means of communicating orders and information in time of battle - analysis of principal naval battles and of joint or opposed naval and military operations, etc. etc.
>
> General Naval History - Resume of the naval history of the great maritime powers of ancient and medieval times - with fuller accounts of the naval conflicts of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, etc.[137]

Thus, what was proposed to be taught at the Naval War College were the roles and missions associated with a mature and multifaceted naval force, most of which exceeded the limited capabilities of the U.S. Navy. What these courses represented, moreover, was the first implicit departure from the commonly held view - both in and outside of the service - that the navy should retain its traditional defensive posture, complete with coastal defence monitors, torpedo boats and the occasional commerce-destroyer. Luce, Goodrich and Sampson essentially provided a

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[135] Ibid.
[136] *Memoranda Relating to the Establishment of a Post Graduate Course*, 19 July 1884. RG 45/38/30.
[137] Ibid.

blueprint from which naval officers could devise and interpret an offensive strategic framework for American naval power - what that was destined to be was still to be determined.

When the time came to actually order the college into existence, Secretary Chandler was again absent from the Department, most likely due to his annual extended vacation in New Hampshire. Serving as Acting Secretary during his absence was Admiral T.E. Nichols, the Chief of the Bureau of Yards & Docks who, like many of his fellow bureau chiefs, was generally opposed to the creation of the new institution. Concluding that Nichols was disinclined to issue the order himself, Commodore Walker informed him that he would write the order and send it directly to Chandler for approval. 'If you approve of it, will you be so kind enough to sign and return it to me, to be dated as of yesterday'.[138] Chandler promptly signed Order No. 325, dated 6 October 1884, that authorised the establishment of the U.S. Naval War College, to be located on Coaster's Harbour Island in Newport.

Now that the college was officially ordered into existence, it was left to Walker and the Bureau of Navigation to ensure that the joint venture received the essential prerequisites of any new educational institution - facilities, teachers, and students. The provision of naval officers was not a problem, for Walker retained the administrative prerogative to order who he wanted to attend the college. Facilities were also not an immediate concern, for Luce planned to use a building that already existed on the island. But that building would soon require extensive renovation, and the college would simply starve without congressional recognition and approval for an annual budgetary allocation. Toward this aim, Walker submitted in December 1884 a request for Congress to provide $13,000, from which Luce and his faculty could purchase the necessary supplies before the first class of naval officers arrived in Newport in September 1885.[139] 'Besides necessary repairs on the house', Luce wrote to Senator Aldrich on 10 December 1884, 'we need furniture, books, and apparatus of various kinds for lecture rooms. We have not, now, even so much as a chair to sit on; and that portion of the building recently occupied by the paupers is uninhabitable in the present condition'.[140] In the end, the individual appeals from Walker and Luce to Congress were unsuccessful, but the Bureau chief did manage to piece together a departmental appropriation of $8,000.[141] That still left the issue of identifying the most qualified candidates to teach the courses envisioned by Luce, Goodrich and Sampson. It was especially imperative to find the right person to develop and teach the courses on naval strategy, tactics and history.

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[138] Walker to Chandler, 7 October 1884. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.
[139] *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1884*, p. 166 and the following citation.
[140] Luce to Aldrich, 10 December 1884. Aldrich Papers. LC/MD/Reel #13.
[141] Chandler to S. J. Randall, 2 February 1885. RG 45/5/18. See also Hattendorf et. al., p. 23. Randall was the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

Luce assumed most of the burden of searching for these prospective candidates, although any final selection would have to be approved by Walker and the Board of Detail before arrangements could be made for the candidate to lecture at the college. Almost immediately, Walker and Luce differed on the efficacy of inviting an army officer to teach naval officers in the 'art of war'. Luce thought that such an appointment was an absolute necessity, as presently there was no one in the navy who was qualified to undertake the endeavour. From his perspective, Walker viewed the appointment as tantamount to an admission of inferiority from the Navy Department. He argued that a naval officer must be found to instruct his brethren in the sensitive topics of naval strategy and tactics. 'I have therefore to suggest', Walker wrote to Chandler on 23 October 1884, 'that an officer to teach the art of war be selected from the line officers of the navy. As the War College has been placed under this Bureau, I write this to you that you may know my feeling, and that you may give such direction as you deem best'.[142] The historical record is unclear as to who Chandler actually sided with on this issue, but a compromise between Luce and Walker seems to have been brokered. For purposes of expediency, Luce was empowered to secure the appointment of an army officer to teach military history, strategy and tactics at the college. He eventually persuaded a reluctant Lt. Tasker H. Bliss, USA, to accept the post that he would not vacate until 1888.[143] In the meantime, Luce continued the search for a talented naval officer to teach naval strategy and tactics.

His first choice was Commander Goodrich, to whom Luce wrote back in January 1884 to inquire whether he was interested in the post.[144] Goodrich graciously declined the offer, not because of a lack of interest but for monetary reasons; he simply could not afford to move to Newport after settling in Washington for his next assignment as an ordnance inspector at the Washington Navy Yard. Goodrich, moreover, doubted whether there was any naval officer qualified for such an endeavour. 'Of one thing I am certain; there is not a person in the navy competent today without much careful preparation to fill the place'.[145] Still without a lecturer in naval strategy and tactics, Luce also considered Lt. M.R. MacKenzie before eventually settling for Commander A.T. Mahan, to whom he wrote to in July 1884.[146] Mahan, who at the time was in command of the U.S.S. *Wachusett* off the coast of Peru, enthusiastically accepted the post on 4 September and immediately sought his detachment from his current duties so that he could adequately prepare for his next assignment.[147] Despite his enthusiasm, however, Walker was unable to secure Mahan's premature return because of Chandler's new scheme for the detailing

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[142] Walker to Chandler, 23 October 1884. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.
[143] Spector, pp. 28-29.
[144] Goodrich to Luce, 12 February 1884. Naval War College Papers. LC/MD/Container #1.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Luce to Walker, 29 August 1884. Cited in Spector, p. 29.
[147] Mahan to Luce, 4 September 1884. Printed in Robert Seager II and Doris D. Maguire, (eds), *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, Volume I, (Annapolis 1975), p. 577.

process in an attempt to limit Walker's power in the Department.[148] The so-called Board of Detail, which also included the two Bureau chiefs most opposed to the college, Commodores Sicard and Schley, would never have approved of such an idea. Mahan would finally arrive in Newport for an initial meeting with Luce in October 1885, but not before antagonising the new department secretary - William C. Whitney - with a direct and unsuccessful appeal for his premature relief from command of the *Wachusett*.[149] There was now installed in the Department a future opponent of Mahan and his efforts at the college, but for now Walker ensured that the necessary orders were issued to the irritable naval officer.

CONCLUSION

By the time the celebrated American naval theorist arrived in Newport for the meeting with Luce, the first abbreviated session of the U.S. Naval War College had already been completed successfully, due in no small part to the individual efforts of Luce, Walker, Goodrich and Sampson. Five years later, Mahan would transform his college lectures on naval history into an epochal treatise on seapower that soon became required reading among statesmen, historians and, most especially, naval officers in the United States, Britain, Germany and Japan. Yet while the publication of *The Influence of Seapower Upon History* elevated Mahan to unprecedented levels of notoriety and exaltation, the popularity of the volume must be tempered by the fact that his analysis blended and refined the crude elements of a strategic framework outlined originally by Luce, Goodrich and Sampson back in July 1884. Foreshadowing Mahan, the three senior service intellectuals had developed a core curriculum six years earlier that was expected to stimulate American naval thought in the areas of strategy, tactics and history. In this regard they received the unqualified endorsement of Walker, the powerful Bureau chief whose timely support for the activities of O.N.I and the Naval War College revealed the extent to which intellectual activities in both institutions were viewed as critical to the fostering of American progress toward strategic naval development in peacetime. This was a viewpoint shared not only by Walker, but also a supporting cast of service intellectuals and practitioners who, in their duties in the Bureau of Navigation and as active members of the USNI, sought to awaken their colleagues to the potential for American naval power - and the vulnerabilities to national defence in absence of it. Inspired by the notions of naval reform, strategic innovation and the lessons of naval history, this self-selected group of naval officers were the principal spokesmen of a service culture that gradually surfaced between 1873 and 1885 through a voluntary association of naval officers.

Thus far the cultural approach to historical naval analysis has provided the context behind the decisions of 1889, with a focus upon the personalities, institutions and events that were critical to

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[148] See Chandler to Sicard, 1 October 1884. Sicard Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.
[149] Mahan to Whitney, 15 Mahan 1885. Printed Seager and Maguire, p. 605.

American progress toward strategic adjustment between 1873 and 1885. When these interrelated factors are pieced together in this fashion, the historical record suggests strongly that the ideas and actions of naval officers were instrumental in shaping key policy decisions made in the 1880s, such as the formation of O.N.I. and the War College. Strategic innovation in naval policy formulation, however, did not evolve during this period without encountering serious organisational resistance at the highest levels of the Navy Department. Even before Secretary Tracy entered the Navy Department in March 1889, his predecessor was a narrowly focused technocrat who was interested more in technological procurement than the strategic implications of the modest battlefleet he aspired to build. Such an emphasis on technology rather than strategy between 1885 and 1889 was tolerable, even commendable so long as the service intellectuals and their institutional sanctuaries continued to receive the official sanction of the department secretary. The next chapter will highlight the series of political and departmental obstacles that threatened to overturn the efforts of the service intellectuals, the culmination of which included the abrupt closure of the Naval War College in January 1889, the temporary exile of Captain Mahan to Puget Sound, and the premature retirement of Admiral Luce from the active list.

Chapter 7

Implementing Strategic Ideas:

The Struggle Over Technology and Strategy in the Navy Department, 1885-1889

INTRODUCTION

The founding of two innovative institutions within the Navy Department, the Office of Naval Intelligence in 1882 and the Naval War College in 1884, typified the progress made thus far in the import of strategic ideas from semi-official think tanks to naval policy circles in Washington. As seen in the previous chapter, this was facilitated by a number of factors between 1873 and 1884, including the membership and activities of the U.S. Naval Institute, the influx of service intellectuals to the Bureau of Navigation, as well as institutional sponsorship of new ideas and institutions to spur strategic naval development. The transition also benefited greatly from the patronage of Secretary Chandler, whose conduct of departmental affairs generally encouraged a decision environment conducive to innovation. His departure from office in March 1885 commenced a new phase of modernisation, under the direction of William C. Whitney, a narrowly focused technocrat who became increasingly hostile to the War College and the officers most associated with it. These officers included Luce, Mahan, Walker and, to a lesser extent, Sampson and Goodrich. Although strategic ideas continued to evolve along with American naval policy during this volatile period, it was left to the actions of naval officers to overcome a series of political and departmental obstacles that endangered the War College, its research agenda, and the prospect for strategic innovation.

This chapter will continue the emphasis on the personalities, institutions and events that shaped the process in which strategic ideas were translated from theory into practice in the 1880s. It is divided into four main sections and supported primarily by archival research. The first section outlines the limited strategic outlook reflected in departmental shipbuilding priorities, despite a resurgence of naval professional arguments offered in investigative reports, congressional hearings, and later the lectures of Mahan at the War College. The next section will consider the circumstances that threatened the existence of the college itself, including the impact of strained professional relationships and a personal vendetta to silence the advocates of the institution. Following an expanded discussion of the unsuccessful campaign launched by Luce, Mahan and Walker to save the War College from its opponents, the third section describes the subsequent measures undertaken to exploit opportunities to convince Whitney's successor of the untapped potential of the college, its contributions to American naval thought, and the prospect for a new brand of strategic thinking in the Navy Department. Finally, the chapter concludes with the implementation of strategic ideas, which required legislative arbitration to affirm a new strategic outlook in American naval affairs. This, not ironically, took place as Mahan's *The Influence of Seapower Upon History* was being readied for publication.[1]

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[1] A.T. Mahan, *The Influence of Seapower Upon History, 1660-1783*, (Boston 1890).

THE CONCEPTIONS AND INSTITUTIONS OF NAVAL STRATEGY

Resistance to policy decisions that foster innovation is common among military organisations, especially in periods of heightened uncertainty due to new technologies that render existing strategies and operational doctrines obsolete. Such was not the case during the three-year stewardship of William Chandler, whose tenure in the Navy Department between 1882 and 1885 can be regarded as a period of successful innovation in American naval affairs. Indeed, throughout his administration, Chandler encouraged a decision environment that largely facilitated the process of naval modernisation, as amply demonstrated by the transition to modern steel warships, as well as the founding of O.N.I. and the War College at Newport.

While his conception of naval strategy remained conventional and patterned according to traditional naval priorities, Chandler envisioned an effective combination in the future between coastal defence vessels and the offensive potential of armoured seagoing ironclads. 'If the nation is to regain its position as a maritime and naval power', he wrote to congressional authorities in December 1882, 'reasonable provision should be made, not only for offensive cruising vessels but also for harbor defenses, by means of ironclads'.[2] When his tenure in the Department concluded in March 1885, Chandler bequeathed to his successor the two organisational innovations that he authorised into existence, to provide their technological and strategic inputs to American progress toward naval modernisation. O.N.I. was tasked with the systematic acquisition and compilation of foreign technical information, while the War College was scheduled to consider the science and art of naval warfare when it opened in September 1885.

Goodrich, Sampson and the Endicott Board

Until Luce and Walker could complete their arrangements to open the War College, however, it was left to the initiative of the new department secretary to consider the strategic as well as the technological components to naval modernisation. While William Whitney proved quite eager to foster development of naval-related technology sectors and domestic shipbuilding facilities for new steel warships, the same cannot be said for his attention to the matters of strategy, which continued to remain on the periphery of American naval affairs. His first year in office, in fact, was devoted mainly to the procurement of naval materiel and new construction, interrupted by his frequent charges of corruption and the structural weaknesses inherent in the vessels laid down by his predecessor.[3] In his annual report for 1885, the contents of which reflect the technological

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[2] Chandler to Davis, 30 December 1882. RG 45/5/17.

[3] For more on the transition between Chandler and Whitney, and the technological focus of the latter, see Leon Burr Richardson, *William E. Chandler, Republican*, (New York 1940), pp. 367-387; Mark D. Hirsch, *William C. Whitney, Modern Warwick*, (New York 1948), pp. 297-336; and Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Gray Steel and Blue Water Navy: The Formative Years of America's Military-Industrial Complex, 1881-1917*, (Hamden 1979), pp. 57-84.

focus during his first year in office, Whitney highlighted the reforms he anticipated would overcome the technological impediments to naval modernisation, which included foreign instruction of American naval constructors and industrial partnerships with private shipyards and manufacturers. 'The problem of keeping pace with the march of improvement in these lines of industry is one of incalculable difficulty; and yet unless the Government is prepared to avail itself promptly of all the improvements that are made in the construction and equipment of its ships, its expenditures are largely useless'.[4]

While naval strategy was clearly not a priority for Whitney during his first year in the Navy Department, the strategic employment of naval forces was considered indirectly when Congress authorised the creation of a special investigative body to assess the coastal defences of the country. The congressional mandate of March 1885 specified that the Board consist of the Secretary of War, William C. Endicott, as well as a contingent of officers from the Army and Navy. Appointed to represent the latter were Commanders W.T. Sampson and C.F. Goodrich, both of whom it will be recalled were accomplished service intellectuals and naval practitioners who had previously collaborated with Luce in establishing the War College in 1884. At the time of their appointment, Sampson was the officer-in-charge of the Torpedo Station in Newport, while Goodrich served as an ordnance inspector at the Washington Navy Yard, both officers reporting directly to Commodore Montgomery Sicard in the Bureau of Ordnance.[5] Whether their assignment to the Fortifications Board, later known simply as the Endicott Board, was made at the explicit request of Commodore Walker is unknown. Given his oversight over personnel decisions in the Navy Department, Walker more than likely seconded the recommendation of Sicard. At minimum, it was a fortuitous selection, as both Sampson and Goodrich had previously exhibited an aptitude for strategic issues that was matched only by their mentor Luce and later Mahan in the senior officer corps.[6]

The deliberations of the Endicott Board remained confidential until the final report was transmitted to Congress in January 1886.[7] In the absence of any input from the Navy Department, Sampson and Goodrich were thus afforded an extraordinary opportunity to advocate a new strategic prescription for the employment of naval forces in conjunction with coastal land fortifications. Their main contribution to the final report, contained in a separate appendix and authored by Sampson, offered the prospect for an incremental expansion of traditional naval practices to include an offensive orientation in the proposed scheme for coastal defence. While accepting the necessity for multiple barriers of coastal defence, in the form of land fortifications

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[4] *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1885*, (Washington 1886), p. xxxiv.
[5] *Navy Register for 1885*, (Washington 1886), pp. 10-11.
[6] As will be recalled from Chapter 6, Goodrich and Sampson served on the Luce Board which recommended the establishment of the Naval War College in 1884. See pp. 151-154 in this thesis.

and other harbour defences (ie., floating batteries), Sampson distinguished between these passive defences and active offensive operations, the latter he envisioned would be conducted by vessels with sufficient armour and powerful guns to defeat a hostile naval force in a decisive naval engagement. In making this distinction, Sampson further urged an appropriate division of labour, with the Navy assuming the burden of conducting active offensive operations against hostile naval squadrons. 'It is, therefore, deemed best that the use of floating batteries should be limited...in any scheme which has for its object the defence of the coast, without any element of active offensive operations beyond the immediate locality'.[8] These floating batteries and other passive defences should be left to the devices of the immediate defenders on land and in the harbours. 'In other words', Sampson continued, 'such floating batteries should be considered as part of the stationary defences of the country and not part of the Navy'.[9] On this latter point the summary report was silent, but in the most general terms concurred that armoured seagoing vessels were meant for active offensive operations, provided of course that they were possessed by the American navy. 'We have none of that kind, and if hereafter built in sufficient number and power they would act offensively and not be confined to the defence of ports'.[10]

Conceptions of Strategy in the Navy Department

In the end, the recommendations of the Endicott Board failed to attract widespread support within Congress, as the $126,377,800 estimated for the suggested improvements was seen as excessive and politically unpalatable.[11] One positive outcome from the investigation, however, was a renewed interest in the course of American naval policy, particularly from the House Naval Affairs Committee. With recent changes in the existing budgetary structure, the legislative committee was now empowered with jurisdiction over naval appropriations, a sweeping prerogative that had previously resided with the unpopular Chairman Samuel Randall and the House Appropriations Committee.[12] Appointed to chair the naval affairs committee in December 1885, Hilary A. Herbert quickly convened special hearings in the wake of the findings of the Endicott Board. The hearings were held throughout February 1886 and included testimony from naval constructors, engineers and selected naval officers. But the highlight of the hearings

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[7] Sampson to Walker, 7 December 1885. RG 38/68/2.

[8] *Report of the Board on Fortification or Other Defenses appointed by the President of the United States under the provisions of the Act of Congress approved March 3 1885*, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., House Exec. Doc. No. 49, p. 309.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., p. 9.

[11] Edward Ranson, 'The Endicott Board of 1885-86 and the Coast Defenses', *Military Review*, (Summer 1967), pp. 74-84.

[12] Charles Stewart III, 'Does Structure Matter? The Effects of Structural Change on Spending Decisions in the House, 1871-1922', *American Journal of Political Science*, (August 1987), p. 588. For more on the congressional career of Randall, see Albert V. House, Jr., 'The Contributions of Samuel J. Randall to the Rules of the National House of Representatives', *The American Political Science Review*, (October 1935), pp. 837-841.

occurred on 12 and 13 February, when Secretary Whitney appeared before the committee to provide his input on the proposed special appropriation to provide for increased naval construction. In the process, Whitney revealed his reluctance to abandon traditional conceptions of naval strategy, despite the recent proposal from Sampson to develop a new strategic prescription for coast defence and with it a modern naval force to conduct active offensive operations at points distant from the American coastline.

When asked about future naval requirements, for instance, Whitney outlined his preference for additional cruisers and how he envisioned their use in naval warfare as effective commerce destroyers. 'If you break up the commerce of a nation now, you not only bring about financial disaster and distress to a country, but dominate almost in time of war', the Secretary informed his sympathetic audience on the committee.[13] 'Take these fast cruisers that can run away from fighting ships and destroy merchant ships, and they play a very important part in time of war. A good many of these ships are pretty good fighting ships that they are building now'.[14] At the request of the committee, Whitney also provided a written assessment of foreign trends in naval construction, with a particular emphasis on the most powerful ironclads built or currently under construction in Britain, France and Italy. In this regard, the Secretary identified the *Nile*, *Renown*, *Amiral Baudin* and *Lepanto*, all in various stages of completion, and evaluated them in terms of their size, armour, armament, speed and cost. After reviewing the design qualities of each vessel, Whitney concluded that the ironclads were 'unworthy of imitation', citing their excessive draught as an impediment to conducting operations in the shallow waters off the American coastline.[15] Instead, the Secretary recommended the immediate construction of six protected cruisers and two armoured vessels of moderate dimensions to support the anticipated improvements to the seacoast and harbour defences suggested by the Endicott Board.[16] As these vessels were expected to be comparable to those built in foreign dockyards, Whitney also proposed that the most modern designs be purchased from naval constructors in Europe. 'I think our true policy is to borrow the ideas of our neighbors so far as they are thought to be in advance of ours [and] give them to our shipbuilders in the shape of plans...'.[17]

In contrast, the committee also received opinions that contradicted the views advocated by Whitney, particularly from senior naval constructors who were increasingly familiar with the designs and capabilities of British naval vessels. Theodore D. Wilson, Chief of the Bureau of Construction, countered that the question over the types of vessels to be built should first be

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[13] *Hearings Before the Committee on Naval Affairs on Bill for Increase in the Naval Establishment.* 49th Cong., 1st Sess. Committee Papers. RG 233/75.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Whitney to Herbert, 28 February 1886. RG 45/5/18.
[16] Whitney to Herbert, 12 February 1886. RG 45/5/18.
[17] Whitney to Herbert, 27 February 1886. RG 45/5/18. Emphasis in the original.

considered by a board of naval officers, in a manner similar to the administrative practices of the British Admiralty. While careful not to challenge Whitney's control over departmental affairs, Wilson inferred that the Secretary was simply not qualified to make such recommendations without prior consultation with 'the line or fighting officers of the Navy'.[18] Even more critical in his remarks was Benjamin F. Isherwood, the well-respected former Bureau chief and outspoken commentator on American shipbuilding priorities. Isherwood railed against Whitney's narrow views on naval strategy, beginning with the wartime functions of modern naval forces. 'A navy is not built with superior speed as its principal excellence, for flight from an antagonist, nor is it equipped with a view to privateering against an enemy's commerce...'.[19] Rather, the American navy should be organised and equipped to fight at sea, which alone necessitates the procurement of first-class ironclads and not the commerce destroyers recommended by Whitney. 'Smaller and unarmored vessels may be found useful as auxiliaries...but they cannot be reckoned as fighting vessels, nor can there be any reason for their existence in the absence of ironclads'.[20] But what invoked his most strenuous objection was Whitney's assertion that ironclads such as the H.M.S. *Nile* and *Renown* were 'unworthy of imitation'. He reminded Herbert and his fellow committee members of what the British were able to accomplish with these vessels, and what they meant to British conceptions of national security:

> This is the kind of vessel which the greatest naval power that exists, or ever existed, has arrived at after years of experimenting and millions of expenditure, as the only kind which can maintain her Mistress of the Seas, and preserve her shores safe from injury and insult. She builds no more fortifications; and needs none as long as she remains supreme on the water, and when that supremacy is lost the fortifications will not avail.[21]

Yet despite this divergence in opinion between the Secretary and the naval constructors invited to appear before the committee, the policymakers were more inclined to accept Whitney's strategic appraisal and the shipbuilding priorities that were contested at the hearings. What appealed most to the committee members had less to do with strategy than the moderate costs anticipated for the shipbuilding programme, even though the final version of the bill authorised only two of the six cruisers originally sought by Whitney. In the end, Congress authorised in July 1886 the construction of the cruisers *Baltimore* and *Vesuvius*, the latter an experimental dynamite gun cruiser, in addition to the armoured vessels *Texas* and *Maine*.[22] But more importantly, an informal arrangement was established in the aftermath of the hearings between Whitney and the committee, which virtually assured him that his policies would remain unchallenged throughout

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[18] *Hearings Before the Committee on Naval Affairs on Bill for Increase in the Naval Establishment.* 49th Cong., 1st Sess. Committee Papers. RG 233/75.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Isherwood to Herbert, 2 April 1886. RG 233/75.

his term in office. The arrangement was alluded to in a committee report written by Herbert and submitted to the House on 10 March.: 'The general policy pursued in framing the bill reported by the committee has been to leave a large amount of discretionary power in the hands of the Secretary of the Navy, who will thus be held responsible for results....We think it better to leave it free to select what may seem at the moment to be the most desirable plan'.[23] Toward that end, Herbert and Whitney quickly formed a working relationship that was later described by Herbert's biographer as 'cooperative' and 'harmonious'.[24] In the remaining years of the Whitney administration, the naval affairs committee drafted legislation that authorised the construction of additional protected cruisers and gunboats, the designs of which were consistent with a defensive orientation and their intended use as commerce destroyers and coastal defence vessels.

Thus, in the four years between 1885 and 1889, the traditional naval practices of the American navy were blindly perpetuated by a department secretary who was concerned less about the strategic implications of the vessels he favoured than the technologies required to build them. What conceptions Whitney harboured about naval strategy, moreover, were narrowly focused around the commonly held doctrines of coastal defence and limited commerce destruction, when a careful study of naval history would have either validated his strategic and force structure choices or repudiated them in favour of alternative policy options. Whitney's technological focus would have prevented such a study, if not for the existence of the War College and its mandate to consider naval history as a medium from which to study the strategic and tactical problems of modern naval warfare. It was an innovative concept borrowed by Admiral Luce from John Knox Laughton, as will be recalled from Chapter 6.[25] To assist him in this regard, Luce requested a talented understudy to assume the burden for the task at hand. The arrival of Mahan at the War College in October 1885 commenced a collaborative effort to uncover the strategic lessons of naval history. In less than a year, Luce's protégé accumulated enough historical evidence to demonstrate the folly of American naval practices, especially those continued by Whitney in a critical period of naval modernisation.

Conceptions of Strategy at the War College

With few exceptions, modern naval historians continue to overlook the collaborative aspect of the professional relationship between Luce and Mahan, even though the countless letters written

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[22] For further discussion of congressional deliberations over naval construction in 1886, see Mark Russell Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882-1893*, (Annapolis 1995), pp. 119-124.
[23] *House of Representatives Reports*, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 993.
[24] Hugh B. Hammett, *Hilary Abner Herbert: A Southerner Returns to the Union*, (Philadelphia 1976), pp. 115-116.
[25] Chapter 6, pp. 148-150.

by Mahan during this period reveal the extent to which he was indebted to Luce for his tutelage.[26] While Mahan should be credited for fulfilling the broad research agenda established by his mentor, it was Luce who guided him through the historical literature, encouraged him to adopt a rigourous methodological approach from which to develop his lectures, and in essence challenged the boundaries of his intellectual limits. That Mahan's accomplishments in the 1880s should be placed within its proper context was underscored by the prominent naval historian Donald Schurman: 'The idea that tactics, strategy, policy and "principles" could be set up in a "scientific relationship" to one another was not a concept outside the temper of the times; but the insistent strength of this synthesising thrust came from Mahan's mentor - the founder of the Naval War College - Stephen B. Luce'.[27] Similarly, there is a tendency in his hagiographies to portray Mahan as an atypical pioneer during this period, when in fact his conception of naval strategy was borrowed from the British and had already attracted the attention of service intellectuals and naval practitioners.[28] The strategic appraisals offered by Goodrich, Sampson and Isherwood are particularly noteworthy in this regard. In fact, it is reasonable to infer that Mahan's conclusions were essentially predetermined in July 1884, when Luce, Sampson and Goodrich developed the core curriculum to be taught at the War College - the descriptions of which were outlined in the previous chapter. Embedded within this curriculum were the elements of a new strategic framework, which Mahan was expected to refine and validate through historical analysis.

To embark on an extended discussion of Mahan and his writings at this point would require another thesis, and is unnecessary when there is already an extensive and sophisticated literature on the subject.[29] For purposes of this study, however, it is necessary to summarise Mahan's conception of naval strategy as it evolved between 1886 and 1889 as an alternative to conventional wisdom prevailing in the Navy Department. In preparing for his first year of lectures at the college, Mahan confirmed through historical analysis what was previously alluded

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[26] Mahan's letters to Luce are catalogued in Robert Seager II and Doris Maguire, (eds), *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, Volume I, (Annapolis 1975). The exceptions to the Mahan hagiographies cited in Chapter 1 - Footnote 7 -can be found in Donald M. Schurman, 'Mahan Revisited', in John B. Hattendorf and Robert S. Jordan, (eds), *Maritime Strategy and the Balance of Power*, (New York 1989); and John B. Hattendorf, 'Luce's Idea of the War College', *Naval War College Review*, (October 1984).

[27] Schurman, p. 104.

[28] Exceptions to this historical treatment include Barry D. Hunt, 'The Outstanding Strategic Writers of the Century', *Naval War College Review*, (October 1984); Ronald Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession*, (Newport 1977); and Peter Karsten, *The Naval Aristocracy: The Golden Age of Annapolis and the Emergence of Modern American Navalism*, (New York 1972).

[29] See, for example, Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command: The Classic Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan Reconsidered*, (Baltimore 1997); John B. Hattendorf, 'Alfred Thayer Mahan and American Naval Theory', in Keith Neilson and Elizabeth J. Errington, (eds), *Navies and Global Defense: Theories and Strategy*, (Westport 1995); John B. Hattendorf, (ed), *Mahan on Naval Strategy: Selections from the Writings of Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan*, (Annapolis 1991); and John B. Hattendorf, 'Alfred Thayer Mahan and his Strategic Thought', in John B. Hattendorf and Robert S. Jordan, (eds), *Maritime Strategy and the Balance of Power*, (New York 1989).

to in the Endicott Report and the testimony of Isherwood. 'Naval Strategy', he observed, 'has for its end to found, support, and increase, as well in peace as in war, the sea power of a country'.[30] As a means to an end - seapower - naval strategy could not be conceived in defensive terms, but rather with an offensive orientation and an expectation to contest the control of the seas in decisive naval engagements. His analysis of British and French naval history supported the notion that control of the seas, through the adoption of an offensive naval strategy, was the only effective means to protect American cities from bombardment and merchant ships from molestation. 'It is then particularly in the field of naval strategy that the teachings of the past have a value which is no degree lessened. They are useful not only as illustrative of principles, but also as precedents, owing to the comparative permanence of conditions'.[31]

When fleshing out these precedents established by naval history, Mahan was especially careful in warning against naval operations that he considered peripheral to the principal wartime functions of navies: to seek out and destroy enemy naval squadrons immediately upon the outbreak of hostilities for the general purpose of obtaining command of the sea. Thus, in his conception of naval strategy, there was a clear distinction between what was *peripheral* and what was *decisive*, which by themselves were indicative of two different lines of policy. '[I]t is most desirable that all persons responsible for the conduct of naval affairs should recognize that the two lines of policy, in direct contradiction to each other, do exist'.[32] Mahan used an analogy to further underscore this point, presumably so that his fellow naval officers clearly understood the fundamental differences between them: 'In the one there is a strict analogy to a war of posts; while in the other the objective is that force whose destruction leaves the posts unsupported and therefore sure to fall in due time'.[33] What he considered peripheral, in the end, were inherently defensive naval operations that, in lieu of an offensive orientation, automatically yielded command of the sea and hence the freedom of action for an adversary to conduct its own naval campaign with impunity. He agreed with Sampson that coastal defence, in the traditional sense, should be left to existing seacoast and harbour fortifications, while commerce destruction by independent cruisers would not be sufficient enough to force the capitulation of an adversary. On this latter point Mahan was insistent. 'It is doubtless a most secondary operation of naval war', he warned his audience. '[B]ut regarded as a primary and fundamental measure, sufficient in itself to crush an enemy, it is probably a delusion and a most dangerous delusion, when presented in the fascinating garb of cheapness to the representatives of the people'.[34]

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[30] Mahan, 'Influence of Seapower', p. 89.
[31] Ibid., p. 9
[32] Ibid., p. 339.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., p. 481.

By the time Mahan approached the podium for his first lecture in October 1886, the new President of the War College had already accumulated a 400 page manuscript, the bulk of which contained the research and analysis later published in *The Influence of Seapower Upon History*.[35] Following the conclusion of his final lecture of the session, he received an enthusiastic endorsement from his mentor Luce, who had recently left the War College to command the North Atlantic Squadron. Reminding the student officers of his reference to the search for a naval Jomini, made in his opening address on 6 September, Luce explained that the search was no longer necessary. 'He is here and his name is Mahan'.[36] For his part, Mahan was stunned and thrilled that his lectures were received with so much enthusiasm. '[M]y own lectures of the last session met with a degree of success which surprised me and which still seems to me exaggerated', he confided to former Midshipman and Academy roommate Samuel Ashe.[37] Whether his lectures were to be entirely successful, however, depended to a large degree on the reception his viewpoints would receive in the Navy Department, especially since Mahan's conception of naval strategy was innovative and contrary to the views espoused by Whitney. To the surprise of Luce, Walker and Mahan, the volatile Secretary was initially inclined to endorse the research agenda conceived at the War College, at least until strained professional relationships evolved into a personal vendetta that threatened both the institution itself and the strategic reforms advocated by his perceived antagonists.

SEEDS OF OPPOSITION AND THE CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE WAR COLLEGE

Exactly when Secretary Whitney sided with the opponents of the War College is unclear, although the seeds of opposition were clearly sown in the first months of his administration. Indeed, his first interaction with Mahan occurred in May 1885, when he received a tactless request from the naval officer for his premature relief from command of the U.S.S. *Wachusett*, presumably so that he could adequately prepare himself for his next assignment at the college.[38] In both his private and official correspondence, Mahan made little effort to conceal his disgust over the deplorable condition of the *Wachusett*, as well as the general hardships of service with the distant South Pacific Squadron. In his letter to the unseasoned department secretary, Mahan assumed the naive Whitney would sympathise with his situation and credit him for lasting so long in such an undesirable billet. Whitney's reaction to the request, however, was immediate, severe, and quite expected from a man who was later described by his biographer as 'unflinchingly immovable' at times and possessing a 'stronger will and sharper temper' than Mahan could have anticipated.[39] The Secretary simply viewed the request as 'weak and unworthy', and rebuked

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[35] Mahan to Luce, 6 May 1886. Printed in Seager and Maguire, p. 632.
[36] William D. Puleston, *The Life and Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, (London 1939) p. 95.
[37] Mahan to Ashe, 8 September 1887. Printed in Seager and Maguire, p. 641.
[38] Mahan to Whitney, 15 May 185. Printed in Seager and Maguire, p. 605.
[39] Hirsch, p. 266-267.

Mahan for both his improper language and the insolence displayed by his apparent willingness to complain to a superior over an assignment.[40] The incident no doubt left a firm impression upon Whitney which, when considered in light of his future actions in opposition to the War College, certainly strengthened his resolve to object to the efforts of Mahan, Luce and others to secure departmental support and congressional recognition for the fledgling institution.

Reversals of Opinion on the War College

For the first two years of his administration, however, Whitney was not openly hostile to the War College or its principal advocates. At the close of 1885, in fact, Whitney neither sought to reverse his predecessor's order for its establishment, nor attempted to undermine Walker's creative financing scheme to sustain the War College with departmental funds in lieu of congressional action.[41] Included in his first annual report to President Cleveland in November 1885 was a carefully worded endorsement of the War College, obviously intended to justify both the existence and objectives of the course at Newport.[42] Though written by Walker, Whitney remained noticeably silent about the institution and took no action to qualify the endorsement of the most powerful Bureau chief in the Navy Department.

But less than a year later, in August 1886, Walker detected that Whitney's attitude toward the War College had moved from casual indifference to opposition, to the point where he felt the need to warn Luce of the impending danger to the institution. There was now for the first time a realistic prospect that the Secretary would intervene on behalf of their opponents in the Department, the most influential of whom still included Commodores Montgomery Sicard and Winfield Scott Schley. Before leaving the Department for his annual holiday, Walker assured Luce on 17 August 1886 that 'I have had advertisements issued for repairs to the building on Coaster's Harbor Island and shall order a class there before I let go of the reins. I find it a little hard to carry the War College as the Secretary himself is opposed to it, but perhaps we shall be able to tide the matter over and have better luck later'.[43] Walker apparently was so concerned about the situation that before leaving on his extended visit to Europe, he instructed his assistant to be readily available to Luce upon request. 'Anything that I can do for you while Captain Walker is away', Commander Bowman McCalla wrote to Luce days later, 'I shall be most happy to do, if you drop me a line'.[44]

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[40] Ibid.
[41] This point was also made in Robert Seager II, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Man and his Letters*, (Annapolis 1977), p. 179.
[42] Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1885, (Washington 1886), p. 86.
[43] Walker to Luce, 17 August 1886. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
[44] McCalla to Luce, 28 August 1886. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #6.

Upon his return to the Department in November 1886, Walker must have been surprised to discover that the War College had finally secured tacit approval of the Secretary, due mainly to the perceived success of the last academic session. Even before the eight-week course officially concluded on 20 November, Walker wrote to Luce to express his relief over this latest development. 'The War College seems to have had quite a boom this season and I hope the result will be to put it out of all danger of being broken up. It was very near being discontinued at one time last spring. If I can do anything for you here let me know'.[45] Later that month, the Bureau chief wrote again to Luce, assuring him that this sudden reversal in opinion by Whitney seemed permanent and not subject to further vacillation. 'I think the War College is now on pretty safe ground. I think the boom given it last summer has modified the Secretary's views very considerable, although I have said nothing, or little to him. It came very near being broken up last summer'.[46]

As to who or what was actually responsible for Whitney's apparent transformation is unknown, but the correspondence between Luce and the Bureau of Navigation points directly to Mahan. 'I am happy that Mahan's lectures have been such a success', McCalla wrote to Luce on 23 October.[47] 'He has sent us a very capital report on the College which will, with its enclosures, look very well in print and ought to gain us friends'.[48] Whitney, in fact, appears to have been so persuaded by the efforts of Mahan and his fellow lecturers during the last session that he included in his own remarks, for the first and last time during his administration, an overwhelming endorsement of the War College in the annual report for 1886:

> The importance of the work to be done by the College can hardly be overestimated. Additional courses of lectures are now in preparation for the coming year upon other subjects bearing directly upon the art of war, and embodying those results of recent investigation which are inaccessible to the Service in general.... [I]t is hoped that in time its scope may be gradually enlarged in the direction of practical training with modern ships and guns, as far as the resources of the service will permit.[49]

But that was not all. Whitney went one step further and attempted, apparently on his own initiative or at the behest of Walker, to secure congressional recognition and the modest appropriation of $12,400 sought by the Bureau chief on behalf of the War College. In this regard he turned to Hilary Herbert, a fellow Democrat and Chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee who emerged during this period as an influential opponent of the War College, for reasons he attributed primarily to naval efficiency and reform. Just weeks before, Herbert railed against the idea of supporting the War College when more important naval matters required

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[45] Walker to Luce, 11 November 1886. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
[46] Walker to Luce, 28 November 1886. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
[47] McCalla to Luce, 23 October 1886. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
[48] Ibid. The report McCalla referred to was transmitted in a letter to the Bureau of Navigation. See Mahan to Walker, 19 October 1886. Printed in Seager and Maguire, p. 636.

congressional authorisation, particularly in the area of shipbuilding, armament and other naval-related technology sectors. 'It does not seem to me that at this time when our old fleet is passing away', he cautioned his colleagues on the floor of the House of Representatives, 'when it will soon live only in history, now when we need money so much for the building of warships and new guns, now is not the time for the establishment of another naval college'.[50] Whitney must have been aware of Herbert's viewpoint on the subject, but nevertheless decided to write to him anyway in an attempt to convince him otherwise. 'The college fills a most important place in the training of naval officers, and supplies a want that has long been felt in the service', he wrote to Herbert on 29 December 1886. 'Although it is comparatively a young institution, it has already done valuable work, and has given such proof of future usefulness that I deem it in the highest degree worthy of being encouraged and fostered'.[51]

Yet less than two years later, in July 1888, Whitney once again appealed directly to congressional authorities over the future of the Naval War College, this time not in support of the institution but against it. His open opposition to the institution now permanent, the Secretary stunned the naval community at Newport with a plan to consolidate the War College with the Naval Torpedo School, the result of which would have subjugated the strategic awareness promoted by the former in favour of the technological emphasis of the Navy Department. As to what prompted Whitney to reverse course and vehemently oppose the War College, a host of personal papers and departmental correspondence point to the strained professional relationships that developed between the Secretary and the most ardent advocates of the War College - Mahan, Luce and Walker - during the course of 1887 and 1888.[52] Alienated by the actions of these officers respective to command decisions and their individual appeals to congressional authorities, Whitney effectively became predisposed to the parochial arguments made against the War College and championed by Schley within the Navy Department. Within eight months of his favourable appeal to Herbert, in fact, Whitney would be antagonised by a public and bitter dispute over a command decision that, while not directly related to the War College, undoubtedly caused the Secretary to alter his perceptions of Luce and his beloved institution.

Whitney, Luce and the Canadian Fisheries Controversy

In late June 1887, Whitney ordered Admiral Luce and the North Atlantic Squadron to patrol the waters in and around the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where conflict frequently occurred between

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[49] *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1886*, (Washington 1887), p. 26.
[50] *Congressional Record*, 49th Congress, 1st Session, p. 5830-5839.
[51] Whitney to Herbert, 29 December 1886. RG 233/77.
[52] Evidence of these strained professional relationships is offered further in this chapter.

American fisherman and Canadian authorities over statutory fishing restrictions.[53] Precisely what the Secretary expected the squadron to accomplish is unclear, as the orders received by Luce simply instructed him to 'protect and look after the interest of American fisherman'.[54] Luce's instructions to his immediate subordinates were more explanatory, where he reminded them that 'it will be your special aim to inculcate the necessity of a careful observance, on the part of our fisherman, of the terms of the treaty of 1818 relating to the three mile limit'.[55] So that his officers understood the guidelines and parameters of the treaty, Luce provided a reading list that, according to him, 'may be read to advantage'.[56] Thus, upon completion of target practice in July 1887, the U.S.S. *Galena*, *Yantic*, and *Ossipee* were dispatched to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, each vessel ordered to sail separately so as not to attract undue attention from the cruisers of the Canadian Fishery Protection Service.

Luce did not accompany his vessels on the mission, but instead travelled to Portland, Maine, where he consulted with a delegation of American fisherman. At their request, he compiled a set of questions that he addressed to Captain P.H. Scott, R.N., the senior officer of the Fishery Protection Service who promptly responded to the inquiry with answers that Luce hoped would shed authoritative insight into the treaty obligations.[57] Without conferring with the Department beforehand, the Admiral decided to release the answers obtained in a circular that was distributed among the fisherman operating in Canadian waters. The motives for his action were made clear in a letter posted to the Canadian Minister of Marine and Fisheries shortly after the circulars were distributed: 'It is believed that a few plain rules of action among our fisherman will go far towards obviating some, if not all, the difficulties which now prove to be a source of irritation between the United States and the Dominion of Canada'.[58] Luce even sought a personal interview with the minister, the outcome of which seemed to confirm the wisdom of his initiative. 'I have therefore nothing further to add', wrote George Forster to the Admiral on 10 August 1887, 'except to say that I very much appreciate the spirit with which you met me, and join you in the earnest hope that as few infractions of the law as possible may take place, and that all needless harshness in its execution may be avoided'.[59]

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[53] For more on the fisheries disputes that in the late 1880s complicated relations between Britain, Canada and the United States, see Charles S. Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapproachment: The United States and Great Britain, 1783-1900*, (New York 1974), pp. 149-163.
[54] Quoted in Albert Gleaves, *Life and Letters of Stephen B. Luce*, (New York 1925), p. 200.
[55] Luce to C.M. Chester, 1 July 1887. Hayes Transcripts. Courtesy of Professor John Hattendorf.
[56] Ibid.
[57] For the interaction between Luce and the American fisherman, see A.M. Smith et. al. to Luce, 13 July 1887, and the reply in Luce to Smith et. al., 30 July 1887. Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #6. The set of questions were reprinted in Gleaves, p. 367-368 (Appendix A).
[58] Luce to G.E. Forster, 2 August 1887. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
[59] Forster to Luce, 10 August 1887. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #6.

Luce could not have anticipated the departmental backlash that resulted when Whitney was apprised of the proceedings between Luce and Canadian officials, particularly his inquiry to Captain Scott and the circular that was distributed to American fisherman. Upon receiving an official report of the situation from Luce, the Secretary replied with a tersely worded telegram that was received on 5 August, in which he severely reprimanded the Admiral for exceeding the limits of his authority. 'Captain Scott is not understood to be the agent of his Government for any such purpose as that for which you have employed him, and if he were the application might be made to our Government in case a correct statement of the Canadian claim is desired'.[60] Luce immediately acknowledged the report, and ensured Whitney that further distribution of the circulars would be avoided.[61] But unwilling to leave it there, Whitney leaked the telegram to the press, for no other purpose but to discredit the Admiral and force his resignation - which is exactly what was accomplished. The press sensationalised the dispute now made public, with newspaper pundits predicting that Whitney would relieve the Admiral when the Secretary travelled to Bar Harbor, Maine, to confer with Luce upon his return.[62] For his part, Luce was appalled by the bitterness and harsh treatment he was subjected to at the instigation of Whitney. In his letter of resignation, written on 26 August, Luce sought an explanation for the action taken against him: 'I am yet at a loss to understand the process of reasoning that could have led to my being publicly censured and my high office brought into disrepute before the whole world'.[63]

Yet for reasons unknown to his biographer and naval historians, Whitney declined to accept his resignation at their meeting in Bar Harbor. More than likely the Secretary concluded that he had miscalculated in seeking to embarrass a naval officer whose public reputation matched his own. Regardless of the reason, Whitney moved next to dismantle the North Atlantic Squadron. The first vessel to be detailed elsewhere was the squadron flagship, U.S.S. *Richmond*, which was transferred to the Asiatic Squadron. Next to leave in succession were the U.S.S. *Pensacola*, which was deemed unfit for service; the U.S.S. *Atlanta*, the latest addition to the squadron which was also transferred elsewhere; and the U.S.S. *Yantic* and *Dolphin*, the tandem having been selected for inspection and special duty, respectively. This left Luce with a squadron that consisted of two vessels, and at times it became necessary for the Admiral to reside for months on shore before transferring his flag to one of the remaining vessels. While in theory Luce retained command of the North Atlantic Squadron, the departure of these vessels merely trivialised his appointment to what was considered the premier command billet among senior naval officers. But aside from the humiliation Luce must have suffered from the action taken against him, there

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[60] Luce to Whitney, 8 August 1887. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
[61] Ibid.
[62] That Whitney intended to discredit Luce in public is underscored by a newspaper clipping that he retained and was found among his personal papers. See 'Admiral Luce: Rumor that He Will Be Relieved of his Command', *The Herald*, 12 August 1887. Whitney Papers. LC/ MD/Volume 47.

were far more grave consequences to consider. The reduction in squadron strength rendered it virtually impossible for Luce to operate the vessels collectively as a "School of Application", which he envisioned as a practical complement to the lectures on naval tactics and strategy conducted at the War College. 'The fundamental idea', he explained to Whitney, 'is to make theoretical instruction and practical exercise go hand in hand; or, in other words, to correlate the work of the Squadron and that of the College'.[64] With this in mind, Luce received permission from the Department in 1886, and again in 1887, to assemble the North Atlantic Squadron at Newport so the naval officers present could combine coursework with practical instruction.

Also jeopardised were the joint amphibious exercises that Luce inaugurated in November 1887 with the enthusiastic endorsement of the U.S. Army.[65] Nevertheless, the Admiral proceeded with every intention to conduct the joint exercises scheduled in 1888 with the vessels available, at least until he discovered that Whitney had instructed the Department to withhold payment for the coal to be expended in the course of the exercises. The Secretary expected the Army to pay for the coal out of its own budget, most likely anticipating that his counterpart in the Department of War would balk at such a request.[66] The relationship already strained by the events of the past year, Luce protested to Whitney in the strongest possible terms in July 1888, observing that in light of this latest incident 'the truth was forced upon me that the views of the Navy Department had undergone a radical change, and were no longer in accord with the policy of making the North Atlantic Squadron a School of practical instruction'.[67] Though carefully worded, the strong language used by Luce in his protest to Whitney bordered on insubordination, most especially his veiled accusation that the Department was intentionally obstructing his professional endeavours, particularly with regard to the North Atlantic Squadron. 'I will not go so far as to say that the Department has purposely thrown obstacles in the way of these squadron evolutions, but its course with regard to the supply of coal is an unmistakable indication that it has no sympathy with them'.[68] The protest had no effect, for only days before Whitney moved definitively against the War College with a scheme to consolidate it with the Torpedo Station.

The Campaign for Congressional Recognition of the War College

Apprised by Commodore Walker of the negative atmosphere prevailing in the Navy Department, Luce was aware as early as December 1887 that Secretary Whitney was again a

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[63] Luce to Whitney, 26 August, 1887. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
[64] Luce to Whitney, 28 July 1888. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
[65] For more on these joint exercises, see Stephen B. Luce, *Squadron Evolutions*, (New York 1887). Reprinted as idem., 'Applied Tactics, November 1887', *Naval War College Review* (October 1984), pp. 21-25.
[66] Gleaves, p. 218.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

formidable enemy of the War College. Accordingly, Luce and Mahan began an intense lobbying effort the next month to secure congressional recognition of the institution, which if obtained would preserve the War College despite the opposition of the Secretary and his allies Schley and Sicard. His squadron preparing for an extended cruise to the West Indies, the Admiral confined himself to his strongest virtue, writing letters to congressional authorities to implore their support for a modest appropriation of $14,400 to sustain the War College for another year.[69] It was thus left to Mahan to travel to Washington and plead their case. He first visited the Navy Department to confer with Whitney, who made no attempt to conceal his opposition to the object in view. In his memoirs, Mahan recalled his encounter with the Secretary, especially his response to Mahan's request that he be allowed to interview personally with congressional authorities on behalf of the War College: 'Mr. Whitney showed me a frowning countenance...and yielded only a reluctant, almost surly, "I will not oppose you, but I do not authorize you to express any approval from me"'.[70] In approving his request, the Secretary most likely figured that Mahan's initiative would fail to rally support for the college. Congress would be deemed responsible for the demise of the War College, not Whitney and his allies in the Navy Department.

One of his first visits to Capital Hill was to the offices of Senator Nelson Aldrich, a frequent correspondent with Luce and the most ardent supporter of the War College in the U.S. Senate. The purpose of the meeting was to identify which members of the House Naval Affairs Committee would be most receptive to Mahan and the institution he represented. Aldrich ensured that Luce was aware of the outcome of the strategy session. 'Capt. Mahan is now here, and I had a talk with him upon the subject', Aldrich wrote to Luce on 20 January 1888.[71] 'I will see Mr. Hayden and try to get him to take hold of the matter. I think he is the best man on the Committee if he is willing to do it. It is of the utmost importance that we should reach Mr. Herbert and Mr. Thomas. Just how to do this puzzles me, as it must be done through new agencies'.[72] In the end, it was decided to refrain from appealing directly to Herbert, as both Mahan and Luce were quite aware of the negative views espoused by 'naturally obstinate' and 'pigheaded' Chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee. '[H]e refuses to listen even to the proposition to keep us alive until some better arrangement (if there be any) can be made to further the works', Mahan observed to a colleague on 28 February 1888. 'There is not the time, nor the force to reduce him within the limits of this year's campaign'.[73]

Mahan and Luce focused instead on the other members of the Committee. By that time Luce had already written to three of the 13 members, the most influential of whom was the committee's

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[69] Spector, p. 55.
[70] Alfred Thayer Mahan, *From Sail To Steam: Recollections of Naval Life*, (New York 1907), p. 298.
[71] Nelson Aldrich to Luce, 20 January 1888. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
[72] Ibid. Aside from Hilary Herbert, Aldrich was referring to Edward Daniel Hayden and John R. Thomas.

most senior Republican and a staunch advocate of the War College.[74] Representative Charles A. Boutelle had little to reveal as to the potential outcome of impending deliberations, but he reminded Luce that recent changes in the composition of the Committee provided additional opportunities to win votes. 'I cannot tell what the policy of the House Naval Committee will be, as its personnel is considerably changed - 5 new Democrats and 1 new Republican - Mr. Hayden of Mass[achusetts]'.[75] While in Washington the previous month, Mahan actually spoke with Hayden but missed an opportunity to consult with William Bourke Cochran, another new addition to the Committee on the Democratic side. In lieu of a personal interview, Mahan substituted a letter in which he enclosed a printed pamphlet of newspaper articles that contained laudatory descriptions of the War College.[76] Mahan also implored Cochran to consider the merits of the institution, and pointed out that there was no other institution where the systematic treatment of naval warfare could be studied and applied in practical exercises. The subject, moreover, was of such importance that it could not left to the voluntary devices of naval officers. 'It is only by setting aside for the necessary study', wrote Mahan on 8 February, 'and providing that the results of their labors be systematically be imparted to others that this, the very highest knowledge of our profession, can be reached and disseminated'.[77] Finally, Mahan suggested for the first time that he was receptive to the prospect of relocating the college from Newport to Annapolis in the future, provided of course that the War College was allowed to flourish without interruption and under congressional oversight. This last suggestion was obviously made in desperation, for Luce would never have approved of such a venture.

Success in the House....Defeat in the Department

That Luce and Mahan would fail in their lobbying campaign must have worried Walker considerably. From his position in the Navy Department, the Bureau chief was painfully aware of the dim prospects for the War College in the absence of congressional recognition. For reasons that no doubt can be attributed to Whitney's open opposition to the War College, the Bureau chief was certain that he could not continue his creative financing scheme to sustain the college for yet another year. 'There is a good deal of doubt about our being able to obtain an appropriation to carry on the War College', Walker wrote to Luce on 2 May 1888. 'If an appropriation is not obtained of course the War College must be closed and that may put it back for some years to come. I am doing my best, however, to obtain an appropriation and do not yet despair of getting

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[73] Mahan to John C. Ropes, 28 February 1888. Printed in Seager and Maguire, p. 650.
[74] C.A. Boutelle to Luce, 10 January 1888; Luce to W.C. Whitthorne, 12 January 1887; and William Ellicott to Luce, 13 January 1888. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
[75] Boutelle to Luce, 10 January 1888. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
[76] A copy of this pamphlet can be found in Mahan to R.P. Rodgers, 22 February 1888. RG 38/69/5.
[77] Mahan to William Bourke Cochran, 8 February 1888. RG 233/104.

it'.[78] In the past, Walker proved quite persuasive in his efforts to support and nurture innovative concepts such as O.N.I. and the Naval War College, despite his episodic clashes with Whitney's predecessor over the scope of his administrative prerogatives as Chief of the Bureau of Navigation. Walker was even successful in 1885 and 1886 at convincing an indifferent Whitney to continue the War College in spite of the opposing views of Sicard and Schley. In later years, however, the professional relationship between the two men soured to the point where Whitney would later refer to the Bureau chief as 'prejudiced' and 'unjust'.[79] Indeed, only months after leaving the Department in March 1889, Whitney warned his successor about Walker and his indomitable talents for persuasion, admitting to B.F. Tracy that 'I was often (innocently) made by that officer to do injustice in ways I did not know of...'.[80]

What was even more disturbing was the apparent elevation of Commodore Schley to the post of senior naval advisor to the Secretary. As will be recalled in Chapter 6, Luce had identified Schley in January 1885 as a strident opponent of the War College within the Department, rivalled only by Montgomery Sicard in the Bureau of Ordnance.[81] As Chief of the Bureau of Equipment & Recruiting, Schley was determined to wrestle Coaster's Harbour Island and the residence of the War College away from the Bureau of Navigation, for the avowed purpose of establishing a shore-based apprentice training station there. In this regard, Schley contested the administration of the War College at every opportunity, at one point refusing to approve vouchers for coal and other maintenance-related expenses that he deemed excessive.[82] Now he was rumoured to exercise considerable influence over Whitney. 'I will not ask you to believe, what I believe but do not know', Mahan wrote to his friend Samuel Ashe, 'but which is commonly believed in the Navy, that the Secy [sic] is largely influenced by a man named Schley - whom you may remember; who has never achieved more than a second-rate reputation, if that, among his brother officers'.[83] Thus, when it came to deciding what to do about the War College, Whitney was more inclined to accept the opposing views of Schley than those espoused by Walker on behalf of the service intellectuals.

Yet while Walker was struggling to preserve the War College from within the Department, Mahan and Luce continued their lobbying campaign with a remarkable degree of success. In June 1888, Mahan could boast that they were successful in securing the requisite number of votes on the House Naval Affairs Committee. 'The fight so far has been in committee of the House in

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[78] Walker to Luce, 2 May 1888. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
[79] Whitney to Tracy, 16 August 1889. Tracy Papers. LC/MD/Box #3.
[80] Ibid. That Whitney and Walker were constantly clashing over administrative matters was underscored in Bowman H. McCalla, 'Memoirs of a Naval Career', (Washington 1910), p. 5.
[81] See Chapter 6, pp. 150-51. For a positive assessment of Schley and his naval career, see Richard S. West, Jr., *Admirals of American Empire*, (New York 1948).
[82] Seager, p. 184.

which we have been completely successful, having 10 votes out of 13', wrote Mahan to Ashe on 14 June.[84] 'The position would be perfectly secure but for the sustained and strenuous opposition of the Chairman, Herbert of Alabama'.[85] In the end, Herbert deferred to the majority on the Committee, and included in the naval appropriation bill - which was introduced on 19 June for consideration by the entire House - was the modest sum sought by Luce, Mahan and Walker. The bill was passed days later by an overwhelming majority.[86] But another hurdle was still to be overcome, this time in the Senate where pockets of opposition remained a particular concern. The most vocal opponent of the War College there was Senator Eugene Hale of Maine, a member of both the Senate Naval Affairs Committee and the Senate Appropriations Committee, the latter responsible for approving the Senate version of the naval appropriation bill. Whether or not Mahan or Luce attempted to convince Hale to reverse his position is unclear, but most likely the two naval officers were content to leave the matter to Senators Chandler and Aldrich, both of whom were ardent advocates of the War College in the Senate. 'I am giving attention to these subjects and think we shall take good care of the war college', Chandler assured Luce on 30 June.[87]

Such a strategy might have worked had Whitney not personally intervened in the deliberations of the Senate. Only seven months before, in January 1888, Whitney acceded to Mahan's request to lobby the members of the House Naval Affairs Committee, apparently assuming that his initiative would end in failure. But the recent passage of the House appropriation bill, which included congressional recognition of the War College, virtually ensured the preservation of the institution for at least another year. To make matters worse, Whitney was informed that the Senate version of the bill also included a provision for the institution. 'Aldrich was so much opposed to the removal of (so-called) War College that Allison and Hale determined to say nothing about it and let you do as you liked', Senator James Beck warned Whitney on 21 July.[88] 'I think it ought to go to the Torpedo Station, but it is [an] election year.... I think it is best to let it alone in the Senate'.[89] Unwilling to heed this advice, Whitney visited the Senate on 24 July to confront Aldrich and seek an amendment to the appropriation bill. He succeeded after a heated discussion with Aldrich, which allegedly included threats of administrative retaliation if the proposed amendment was not agreed to.[90] The Senate version of the naval appropriation bill was

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[83] Mahan to Samuel A. Ashe, 10 August 1888. Printed in Seager and Maguire, p. 653.
[84] Mahan to Ashe, 14 June 1888. Printed in Seager and Maguire, p. 652.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Mahan, 'From Sail to Steam', pp. 299.
[87] Chandler to Luce, 30 June 1888. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
[88] J.B. Beck to Whitney, 21 July 1888. Whitney Papers. LC/MD/Container #54.
[89] Ibid. Emphasis in the original.
[90] Hirsch, p. 339; and Mahan to Ashe, 10 August 1888. Printed in Seager and Maguire, pp. 653-655.

quickly passed by an overwhelming majority on the next day. Whitney was now authorised to consolidate the War College with the Torpedo Station after 1 January 1889.

In the wake of his successful appeal to the Senate, Whitney referred to the personal reasons and the officers that prompted his actions. 'These officers have been working behind my back all united', the Secretary protested to his wife on 25 July, 'and I recommended, but I didn't seem to get it as I recommended, and I finally awoke to the fact that the whole thing was being set up and worked in Congress behind me. I will wipe the whole thing out shortly'.[91] On 1 August, Whitney informed a stunned Mahan that the upcoming academic term would be shortened from four to three months.[92] A few days later, on 12 August, the Secretary released a statement to the press. 'I have favored the War College in each of my annual reports', argued Whitney in defending his actions, 'but I do not deem the present arrangement wise or sensible, and I have not seen any other person understanding the matter who does'.[93] The fate of the War College now determined for the remaining months of his administration, Whitney fulfilled what amounted to a personal vendetta to silence Luce, Mahan and Walker. Once an advocate himself, the strained relationships between Whitney and the these reform-minded officers quickly overshadowed the contributions of the War College and the potential for a new mode of strategic thinking in the Navy Department. Whether or not the naval officers would eventually be successful in resurrecting the institution, as well as its underlying objectives, depended to a large degree on Whitney's successor. Another lobbying campaign would be required, this time for the benefit of B.F. Tracy, who would succeed Whitney on 5 March 1889.

THE WAR COLLEGE AND A NEW BRAND OF STRATEGIC THINKING

In August 1888, the prospect that Whitney would be replaced in the Navy Department was far from certain, as the next presidential election was not scheduled to be held until November 1888. In the meantime, Luce and Mahan launched a final effort to convince the Secretary to reverse course and preserve the War College as an institution separate from the Torpedo Station, which was also located in Newport but fell under the jurisdiction of Commodore Sicard and the Bureau of Ordnance. Sicard was an opponent of the War College throughout its entire existence, having initially opposed it when the concept was first considered by the Bureau chiefs in March 1884. Now the Bureau chief would oversee the combined Torpedo Station and War College, which it soon became known after the Department officially ordered the consolidation on 11 January 1889.

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[91] Whitney to Flora Whitney, 25 July 1888. Whitney Papers. LC/MD/Container #54.
[92] Mahan to Whitney, 5 August 1888. Printed in Seager and Maguire, p. 653.
[93] Reprinted in Austin K. Knight and William D. Puleston, 'History of the United States Naval War College', Unpublished Manuscript, Chapter IV, p. 4. Courtesy of the U.S. Naval Historical Center in Washington, DC.

Fortunately for Luce and Mahan, the officer-in-charge at the Torpedo Station happened to be Goodrich, a frequent lecturer at the college who had originally assisted Luce in shaping the institution and its curriculum back in 1884. Goodrich clearly grasped the implications of consolidation to the future of the college, and was determined to ensure its survival despite its new location and association with Sicard. 'The evident purpose in this move was to kill the college', Goodrich later recalled.[94] 'It happened, however, that the latter fell into friendly hands, and I made a point of honor of keeping it alive'.[95] Yet despite the short term assurances from their colleague Goodrich, both Luce and Mahan concluded that the underlying objectives of the War College were simply incompatible with those of the Torpedo Station, which retained a strong technological focus in its research endeavours.[96] In such an environment, the War College would not survive consolidation, especially in a future without Goodrich.

The Debate between Technology and Strategy

Luce and Mahan were certainly not averse to American efforts to develop a solid technological foundation from which to build modern battlefleets. But what they objected to was the constant struggle between technology and strategy, which was now resolved within the Navy Department in favour of the former, thereby rendering strategic naval thought a peripheral concern. Mahan decried this situation in his opening address when the next session of the War College convened on 6 August 1888, only days after Whitney notified him to condense the course from four to three months. His remarks were clearly meant for a multi-venue audience, located in both Newport and the Navy Department back in Washington. Without mentioning the Secretary by name, Mahan railed against the current trend in American naval policy that emphasised the pursuit of naval shipbuilding technology over the tactical and strategic elements of naval warfare. The War College, in his opinion, was the only institution within the American naval establishment with a departmental mandate from which to remedy this imbalance between technology and strategy. 'Have not we, by too exclusive attention to mechanical advance', the speaker challenged his audience, 'and too scanty attention to the noble art of war, which is the chief business of those to whom the military movements of the Navy are entrusted, contributed to the reproach which has overtaken both us and it?'.[97]

Obviously sensitive to the narrowly focused priorities of the Secretary, which did not include a strategic aspect to naval policy formulation throughout his administration, Mahan highlighted the limited scope of planning functions and activities that essentially precluded the formulation of

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[94] Goodrich to Sperry, 5 March 1906. Quoted in Knight and Puleston, Chapter V, p. 2.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Spector, pp. 57-58.
[97] A.T. Mahan, 'Address - At the Opening of the Fourth Annual Session of the War College', *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, Volume XIV (1888), p. 627.

strategic policy in absence of an institution such as the War College. '[T]here seems little doubt that the mental activity which exists so widely is not directed toward the management of ships in battle, to the planning of naval campaigns, to the study of strategic and tactical problems, nor even to the secondary matters connected with the maintenance of warlike operations at sea'.[98] These were tasks that were best accomplished by naval officers and graduates of the War College, possessed with the foresight to apply what was learned through the systematic treatment of naval strategy, tactics and history. Before concluding his remarks, however, Mahan returned to his general theme on the precarious imbalance between strategy and technology in American naval affairs, and warned against optimistic assessments of naval progress that were based solely on the merits of technological development. 'I will sound again the note of warning against the plausible cry of the day which finds *all* progress in material advance, disregarding that noblest sphere in which the mind and heart of man, in which all that is god-like, reign supreme; and against that temper which looks not to the man, but to his armor'.[99]

Later that month, Luce invoked similar arguments in a petition written by him and endorsed by Admiral David Dixon Porter and six unnamed officers. Addressed to Whitney and sent to the Department on 16 August, the group of officers officially protested the recent decision to consolidate the War College and the Torpedo Station, mainly on the grounds that the aims of the institutions were simply incompatible with each other. '[T]he lines of research followed by the War College are so entirely different from those of the Torpedo Station, that the two do not lend themselves to combination'.[100] It was urged instead that both institutions should be kept separate, in recognition of the fact that 'the subjects treated by the War College, though of the highest importance, have been and are neglected by naval officers generally, in favor of the development of material'.[101] Without remedial action, the group of naval officers cautioned Whitney, the consolidation scheme 'will stifle at its birth a movement which gives the highest promise of future usefulness to the naval profession'.[102]

That Whitney remained steadfast in his opposition to the War College was quite evident months later, when Walker wrote to Luce to express his doubts over the prospects for the institution. 'Of course I shall do what I can to prevent the War College being hurt, but I am not very sanguine', he told the Admiral on 19 November 1888.[103] The Bureau chief was apparently responding to some personal criticism from Luce, who for some reason blamed Walker for not

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[98] Ibid., p. 629.
[99] Ibid., p. 634. Emphasis in the original.
[100] Porter to Whitney, 13 August 1888. NWC Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Walker to Luce, 19 November 1888. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7.

shielding the War College from Whitney.[104] His allegation was unwarranted, and Mahan did not hesitate to set the record straight. 'I think Walker [is] both interested and angered about the College & that he will certainly work to undo the wrongs of this year', Mahan reminded his mentor on 14 November.[105] 'But even if your estimate of his action were correct - it cannot be overlooked that he is the first party whose concern the College is, and I next under him. I know him to have accomplished a good deal and he has backed me up well...'.[106]

The friction between Walker and Luce at this point was quite understandable. The Admiral was clearly frustrated over the events of the past year, and he considered relinquishing command of the North Atlantic Squadron before his statutory retirement in March 1889. Luce, in fact, had tentatively arranged to be relieved on 15 January by his eventual successor, Rear Admiral Bancroft Gherardi, who had appealed directly to Secretary Whitney for the appointment. To further encourage the transition from Luce to Gherardi, the Secretary offered to appoint Luce to a commission that would choose the site for a new navy yard. Upon hearing about these discussions, Walker immediately wrote to Luce and pleaded with the Admiral not to consent to the scheme until the Bureau chief travelled to New York to see him. 'I don't want you to commit yourself to giving up your squadron or any change of duty, until I have given you a pointer or two in conversation when I see you'.[107] By the time Walker arrived in New York for their meeting, Luce had already visited Gherardi that morning and assented to the transition, after which Luce and Walker conferred in private over the matter. Thereupon Luce quickly reversed himself and informed a stunned Gherardi that he had no intention of relinquishing command of the North Atlantic Squadron, until he was compelled to do so by statutory retirement. Gherardi brooded over Luce's intentions in a letter to Whitney on 26 November, the news of which must have both surprised and infuriated the Secretary.[108] If Whitney could not induce Luce into premature retirement and temporary exile on the proposed commission, the Secretary would certainly accomplish his other scheme. On 30 November, Whitney ordered Captain Mahan to head a similar commission, effectively banishing him to the Pacific Northwest for the remaining months of the Whitney administration.

A Renewed Struggle to Save the War College

The action taken against Mahan may have been motivated by yet another reason. Only weeks before, President Cleveland was defeated in the national election by the Republican candidate

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[104] Goodrich also blamed Walker for not protecting the War College. Goodrich to Mahan, 23 February 1893. Mahan Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel # 2.
[105] Mahan to Luce, 14 November 1888. Printed in Seager and Maguire, p. 664-665.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Walker to Mahan, 22 November 1888. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
[108] The encounter between Luce, Walker and Gherardi was described by the latter officer in his letter to Whitney. See Gherardi to Whitney, 26 November 1888. Whitney Papers. LC/MD/Container #56.

Benjamin Harrison. It was now certain that Whitney would be replaced in the Navy Department, which may have prompted the attempt to scatter his antagonists before his departure from office in March 1889. To his credit, Luce urged Walker to intervene and reverse the orders given to Mahan, but the orders had come directly from Whitney himself and thus could not be revoked.[109] Following a successful mission to Haiti with the North Atlantic Squadron, Luce prematurely relinquished his command on 28 January, and was instructed by Whitney to return home and await orders.[110] No further orders were forthcoming, however, and Luce was subsequently removed from the active list weeks later upon reaching the age for statutory retirement. The fate of the War College thus rested on Whitney's successor, whose opinions on the subject were unknown. 'The Republican administration may take advice if we can get a Secretary who wishes to run the Navy on true principles', wrote Porter to Luce in the final months of 1888.[111] 'In that case we may in the end have the War College, provided we obtain a man who will prevent its rehabilitation in connection with the Torpedo School...'.[112]

In the absence of Mahan, it was left to Luce and his contacts in Washington to secure the advocacy of Whitney's successor in favour of the War College. With no prior experience in naval affairs, Benjamin F. Tracy entered the Navy Department with no particular mandate from President Harrison, other than broad assurances to secure 'the construction of a sufficient number of modern warships as rapidly as consistent with care and perfection in plans and workmanship'.[113] In this regard, Tracy benefited throughout his four-year tenure from the technological focus of his predecessor, especially his efforts to promote industrial partnerships for the domestic production of armour, armament and warships. The Secretary was thus strongly encouraged to continue these successful industrial policies, but such was not the case when it came to the intellectual component to naval development. It was in this area where opportunities still existed to convince Tracy of the untapped potential of the War College and the contributions it could make to strategic naval thought. Luce therefore wasted no time in writing to Admiral Porter to see if he would act as an intermediary on his behalf. 'The enemies of the War College so far succeeded under the late administration in destroying the institution, as to render the task of resuscitation somewhat difficult', he confessed to the Admiral of the Navy on 9 March, only days

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[109] John A.S. Grenville and George Berkeley Young, *Politics, Strategy and American Diplomacy: Studies in Foreign Policy, 1873-1917*, (New Haven 1966), p. 25.
[110] Whitney to Luce, 28 January 1889. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
[111] Porter to Luce, 29 November 1888. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
[112] Ibid.
[113] James D. Richardson, (ed), *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1782-1902*, (Washington, 1904), p. 10. Cited in Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Benjamin Franklin Tracy: Father of the Modern American Navy*, (Hamden 1973).

after Tracy assumed control of the Department.[114] 'If, however, you will lend your powerful influence, I trust the triumph of the enemies of the change will be but temporary'.[115]

Porter was more than happy to assist Luce in this regard, and he sought a personal interview with Tracy within days of receiving the first of what became a series of letters from his former protégé. What Porter reported back must have gratified Luce. 'Mr. Tracy is an "old gentlemen" at sixty two, is a very accessible man, and will do nothing in a hurry', he assured Luce on 14 March.[116] 'He is very wary of having passed many years in the study of law. He listens quietly and doesn't commit himself'.[117] Porter would admit in a subsequent letter that, although 'I have had only one special interview with the Secretary, I came away much impressed with the profound knowledge he possesses of naval affairs which I think must have been born in him!'.[118] Aside from Porter, the Secretary was also visited by Senator Aldrich, a fellow Republican who must have harboured some resentment at Whitney and his actions against the War College. Aldrich quickly invited Tracy to visit Newport the next month, presumably so that the Secretary can make his own assessment of the institution and its former location on Coaster's Harbour Island. At the last minute, however, Tracy was forced to postpone the visit he would later make months later.[119]

Encouraged by the favourable impression of the new Secretary, in office for less than two weeks, Luce composed a nine-page letter which he sent to Admiral Porter for his endorsement before forwarding it to Tracy. As suggested by the length of the letter, Luce outlined a vigorous argument in favour of the War College, the purpose for its existence, and its progress in advancing the study of strategic and tactical problems in modern naval warfare. He first sought to distinguish the differences between the War College and the Torpedo Station before their consolidation. 'One had to do with Materiel and the other with Personnel. One had to do with the manufacture of a single implement of war; the other with the intelligent uses of all implements [of] war'.[120] Aside from the divergent lines of research, moreover, the Torpedo Station was meant for junior officers so that they could study the technical aspects of naval gunnery and torpedoes, whereas the War College was meant for a much higher purpose. The 'higher plane of research' which was conducted at the War College, in contrast, was 'intended, primarily, for Commanders, Captains, Admirals, and the General Staff which, it is hoped will one day form part of our naval

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[114] Luce to Porter, 9 March 1889. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Porter to Luce, 14 March 1889. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Porter to Luce, 21 March 1889. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7. Walker was equally impressed with Tracy. See Walker to H.M. Dyer, 2 May 1889. Walker Papers. NHFC/LC/Container #1.
[119] Tracy to Aldrich, 27 April 1889 [Telegram]. Tracy Papers. LC/MD/Container #24.
[120] Luce to Tracy, 14 March 1889. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7. Emphasis in the original.

administration'.[121] Luce went on to explain that the War College pioneered research in the science and art of modern naval warfare, the basis of which was an historical process to unveil the fundamental principles of warfare at both the strategic and tactical levels of analysis. In this endeavour Luce reserved no credit for himself, for which he was certainly entitled, but highlighted instead the individual accomplishments of Captain Mahan. 'His labors, judged by the ordinary standards of brain workers, were all but Herculean; and the lectures he produced, challenge comparison with the best historical essays of the day'.[122] But, more importantly, the lectures Mahan produced on behalf of the War College 'produced this additional merit - that they entered a new field of inquiry, with an original and exhaustive method of treatment'.[123]

At the same time, Luce was careful to point out that the research, analysis and teaching conducted at the institution was performed not by a single individual but a group of naval officers with different areas of expertise. He referred to these officers as 'collaborators', who studied and taught their fellow naval officers on the proper role of the ram, naval gun and torpedo in naval warfare. These lectures were at times technical in content, but were ultimately intended to promote discussions of the strategic and tactical capabilities of each weapon. 'It will be observed that these officers did not concern themselves with the manufacture of these weapons; that was left to others. But what they dwelt upon exclusively, was the best uses in war of the perfected arm under consideration'.[124] From these lectures, it was then left to Mahan to transform the tactical qualities of each weapon into a practical system of naval tactics, a task that would have been completed had his work not been interrupted by the opponents of the War College and his current detail to Puget Sound. 'It was in the midst of this great work that Captain Mahan found himself treated with contumely by those to whom he had every right to look for encouragement and support, the College broken up and his labors brought to an untimely end'.[125] In an indirect reference to Schley and the Bureau of Equipment, Luce complained that the underlying motivation to extinguish the War College could not be reduced to departmental concerns for naval efficiency and reform, but rather the opposition and selfish devices of the Bureau chief.[126] For all of these reasons, Luce concluded, an independent assessment was required so that Tracy could render an informed opinion as to the necessity of the War College and its proposed relocation to Coasters Harbor Island.

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[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Mahan also believed that Schley was behind the consolidation scheme. See Mahan to Luce, 14 November 1888. Printed in Seager and Maguire, p. 664.

A Struggle Transformed - Strategic Ideas in the Navy Department

The reaction from Tracy was both prompt and tempered, but conveyed an enthusiasm that reflected both prior discussions about the War College and the persuasive arguments outlined above. 'The subject has already been brought to my attention', the Secretary wrote to Luce on 30 March, 'and I have had some conversation with Senator Aldrich in regard to it. I can assure you that I consider no matter of greater importance than the education of our officers on the subjects which have been introduced at the College'.[127] In the following months, his words were matched by actions and decisions that further exemplified the Secretary's support for Luce and the institution. First, at the behest of Admiral Porter, Tracy ousted Schley from the Navy Department in April 1889, assigning the Bureau chief to the new cruiser U.S.S. *Baltimore* and replacing him with Captain George Dewey.[128] Two months later, Tracy reorganised the functions and duties of the Bureaus within the Department, transferring oversight for the apprentice training system and Coaster's Harbour Island to Commodore Walker and the Bureau of Navigation. Porter applauded these changes, especially the efforts to transform the officers of that Bureau into an unofficial general staff. 'The fact of making the Navigation Bureau a Military Bureau', the senior Admiral wrote to Tracy on 1 July, 'acting directly under the orders of the Secretary of the Navy, has removed the great source of difficulty in the Navy Department...'.[129]

Following a visit to Newport in August 1889, where Tracy conferred with Luce and possibly Aldrich, the Secretary also announced the formation of the Squadron of Evolution. The priorities of this new squadron were exactly what Luce intended to accomplish with the North Atlantic Squadron between 1886 and 1888, mainly the practical application of naval steam tactics, squadron movements and other doctrinal concepts derived from the tacticians at the War College. Appointed to command the squadron was Walker, who after eight years in the Navy Department was entrusted to fulfil the expectations of Tracy and his friend Luce.[130] Finally, in November 1889, Tracy issued a definitive statement in support of the War College in his annual report, presumably so as to remove any doubt about his intention to reverse the actions of his predecessor. To the collective relief of Luce, Mahan, Walker and a supporting cast of naval officers, the Secretary warmly endorsed the intellectual activities undertaken at the War College which, in his estimation, 'is unquestionably one of the most important institutions connected with the Navy'.[131] This in spite of the overwhelming opposition that was encountered during its short existence. 'Its work, even in the restricted sphere to which it has hitherto been confined, has been

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[127] Tracy to Luce, 30 March 1889. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
[128] Oliver Selfridge to Chandler, 28 January 1890. Cited in Walter R. Herrick Jr., *The American Naval Revolution*, (Baton Rouge 1966), p. 45*f*.
[129] Porter to Tracy. 1 July 1889. Tracy Papers. LC/MD/Container #2.
[130] Daniel H. Wicks, 'The First Cruise of the Squadron of Evolution', *Military Affairs*, (April 1980), p. 64.
[131] *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1889*, p. 37.

of immense benefit to the service, and it is of the highest importance that nothing should be done that will in any way interfere with its efficiency'.[132] With such strong words of endorsement, Tracy embraced the War College and its contributions to the process of strategic naval development, which began in earnest when the Secretary proved receptive to the innovative ideas of Luce and Mahan throughout the first year of his naval administration.

Yet other opportunities still existed to further erode the mental barrier that currently divorced technology from strategy within the American naval establishment. In this regard, Tracy availed himself of the latest advances in strategic naval thought, which were also introduced to him through the writings and teachings of the two principal spokesman for strategic awareness in upper policy naval debates - Luce and Mahan.

While Mahan was quickly elevated to the position of senior naval advisor to the Secretary following the publication of *The Influence of Seapower Upon History* in 1890, the historical record remains unclear as to when and if Tracy was privy to Mahan's manuscript prior to its widespread distribution. Unfortunately for historians, the extent of Mahan's written interactions with the Navy Department during this period is largely unknown, as a significant gap in departmental correspondence exists between 1885 and 1890 - most likely the result of inadvertent destruction.[133] Yet the letters retained in private collections indicate a strong possibility that Tracy previewed the manuscript prior to its publication, courtesy of the Bureau of Navigation. Selected portions of the manuscript, in fact, were in the possession of the Bureau as early as April 1889, when Mahan wrote to the Department to confirm that his lectures had been received in the post.[134] At some point between April and August, Walker either reviewed the lectures himself or relied upon the favourable comments of J.R. Soley, the naval historian and frequent lecturer at the War College who was currently detailed to Walker as head of the Naval Records and Library. That Walker and Soley responded favourably to the manuscript was evident shortly thereafter, when the Bureau chief assigned Mahan to the Bureau of Navigation so that he could continue his research endeavours under the auspices of the Navy Department. Walker also agreed to purchase 50 copies of the book when finally published. When Mahan encountered difficulties in locating a interested publisher for his manuscript, Soley volunteered to recommend it to a friend who was in the business in Boston.[135] His original contact unsuccessful, Soley persevered and eventually located an interested publisher for Mahan during the last week of September 1889.

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[132] Ibid.
[133] This issue was also raised in Seager and Maguire, p. 641*f.*
[134] Mahan to R.P. Rodgers, 9 April 1889. Rodgers at the time was assigned to the Office of Naval Intelligence and detailed to the Bureau of Navigation. Walker often deferred to Rodgers in his capacity as Chief Intelligence Officer. See Rodgers to Walker, 11 March 1897. Printed in Frances P. Thomas, *Career of John Grimes Walker*, (Boston 1959), p. 131-132.
[135] Mahan to Luce, 21 September 1889. Printed in Seager and Maguire, pp. 707-708.

If Tracy was not privy to the manuscript through Walker in the Navy Department, Mahan was at least afforded an opportunity to meet with the Secretary in July 1889, when Tracy arrived in Newport for the first of two visits to the War College. The meeting was arranged by Walker, apparently at the behest of the Secretary, and Mahan was subsequently ordered to Newport from his summer residence in Bar Harbor, Maine.[136] Given this sequence of events, it thus seems implausible that Tracy did not preview selected portions of the manuscript before November 1889, when the Secretary first publicly endorsed a forward offensive naval strategy and the creation of American battlefleets to prosecute it. The Secretary more than likely was aware of the contents of the manuscript before receiving a personal overview of the highlights from the author during their meeting at Newport.

Following his meeting with Mahan, Tracy was also provided with a timely summary of the strategic naval thought advanced by the War College. The summary first appeared in the form of an article written by Admiral Luce in May 1889 and published in the *North American Review* two months later. In the article, which was entitled 'Our Future Navy', Luce broadly described the strategic framework that gradually evolved from the collaboration between the two naval officers since Mahan's attachment to the War College in October 1885. The central tenets of this framework were three essential concepts which, when viewed in the aggregate, form the basis of their prescription for American naval strategy in the future. What they advocated, in short, was a naval force with an *offensive* orientation and outfitted with *battleships* to harness the fighting power necessary to defeat an opposing force in a *decisive* engagement.

At the heart of this strategic framework, from which future shipbuilding options should be assessed, selected and implemented, was the proper recognition of the wartime functions of modern naval forces. 'The role of a navy is essentially offensive, as contrasted with seacoast fortifications, which are defensive. This broad distinction must be borne in mind, if the persistent but unavailing efforts of our highest naval authorities, in time past, to organize a navy, are to be understood'.[137] As such, Luce argued that an offensive naval force should be organised and equipped accordingly, so as to harness the fighting power of naval squadrons in decisive engagements with an adversary. In his estimation, fighting power was the most important attribute of modern naval forces, as naval campaigns in the future would be short-lived and decided in months. What was required on the line of battle, therefore, were battleships of superior fighting power to augment the accessories - cruisers, coastal defence monitors and other unarmoured vessels - that Luce considered peripheral to the roles and missions of an American

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[136] Mahan to Walker, 2 July 1889; and Mahan to Chester, 3 July 1889. Printed in Seager and Maguire, p. 692.

battlefeet in wartime. '[T]hose ships were designed expressly to run away from battleships.... That is the fundamental idea which is guiding the development of the new navy: to run away'.[138] He was equally critical of commerce destruction as the principal mode of American naval operations, which he deemed of secondary importance to the destruction of the battleship squadrons likely to be possessed by an enemy. For these reasons, it was imperative to discontinue current shipbuilding trends and strategic misconceptions, and instead allocate future resources to outfit a modern naval force along an offensive orientation. 'A solitary American steel cruiser', Luce ominously warned in conclusion, 'represents the latent possibilities of a great country placidly awaiting some national disaster to generate its mighty forces'.[139]

Luce obviously intended the article for a much wider audience than the subscribers to the *North American Review*. As President of the U.S. Naval Institute, a post he held since October 1887, Luce suggested that the voluntary organisation reprint the article for inclusion in the next volume of the *Proceedings*.[140] Included with the article were remarks solicited by the Institute from its members. Mahan's comments warrant particular mention here, as the reserved naval officer offered his unqualified assent to the arguments posited by his intellectual mentor. 'I have only to express my entire concurrence in the general tenor of this admirable paper, and in the principles of naval policy adopted in it'.[141] While brief in length, Mahan provided a revealing snapshot of what seemed to be foremost in his mind - the folly of current strategic practices and the potential for strategic innovation within the Navy Department. 'If I am right in my opinion', he confidently asserted, 'a war against an enemy's commerce is an utterly insufficient instrument', which if continued would commit the country to 'an erroneous and disastrous policy'.[142] While the building of steel cruisers were useful experiments, especially in terms of technology acquisition and domestic production, the 'real strength of a navy' was harnessed in the fighting power of battleships.[143]

Strategy, Structure and the Origins of American Power Projection

As for the prospect for strategic innovation within the Navy Department, Luce and Mahan had already succeeded in prompting Tracy to conduct a department-level strategic review. On 16 July, in the wake of his meeting with Mahan and the article written by Luce, the Secretary appointed a board of officers to consider the next phase of American naval development. Under

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[137] Stephen B. Luce, 'Our Future Navy', *USNIP*, Volume XV (1889), p. 545. Published originally in the *North American Review*, Volume 149 (1889).
[138] Ibid, p. 544-545.
[139] Ibid, p. 552.
[140] Wainwright to Luce, 20 September 1889. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
[141] Luce, 'Our Future Navy', p. 554.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.

the direction of Captain W.P. McCann, the Commandant of the Boston Navy Yard, Tracy also named Captains R.L Phythian and W.T. Sampson, Commander W.M. Folger and Lieutenant-Commander W.H. Brownson to the what became known thereafter as the 'Policy Board'. The scope of the Board was quite expansive, as Tracy expected its deliberations over the next six months to provide the strategic rationale behind a well-conceived shipbuilding programme for consideration by congressional authorities. The Secretary subsequently added Naval Constructor Richard Gatewood to augment the technical expertise of the group, which was composed mainly of naval practitioners with the exception of Sampson, the career naval educator and current Superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis. A former member of the Luce and Endicott Boards in 1884 and 1885, respectively, Sampson provided the intellectual arguments in favour of the expansive shipbuilding programme. That he should be largely credited for the linkage between strategy and structure in the final report is quite evident when comparing it with similar arguments Sampson invoked in a lecture to the U.S. Naval Institute in April 1889, which also appeared in the *Proceedings* months later.

In a lecture entitled 'The Naval Defense of the Coast', Sampson returned to the same arguments he advocated as a member of the Endicott Board in 1885-86. His strategic prescription included a multifaceted naval force with an offensive posture to augment the existing coastal fortifications. 'To the efficient defense of a coast', Sampson observed, 'it is important to act offensively when opportunity offers.... A blow struck at such a moment may be decisive, while to be powerless to follow up the effect of a repulse by the fortifications would permit the enemy to recuperate and renew the attack, or at least to withdraw when they might have been destroyed'.[144] Discounting the threat of a seaborne invasion, Sampson further depicted an offensive seagoing force as an outer layer of coastal defence, tasked primarily with destroying an adversary before it poses a threat to American cities and ports on the coastline. But the destruction of enemy naval squadrons was only one task to be accomplished by a multifaceted naval force which, when viewed in the aggregate, necessitated a substantial force to fulfil and exploit the benefits of a forward offensive naval strategy . '[T]he legitimate field of action of such a force is upon the high seas, in protecting our commerce, in destroying the commerce of the enemy, in making attacks upon undefended portions of the coast (thus forcing him to maintain a fleet at home), or in meeting and destroying a fleet'.[145] A clearly articulated naval strategy that failed to account for these offensive roles and missions would inherently restrict the functions of the navy in wartime. 'If the navy is held for coastal defense', Sampson cautioned his audience, 'these other important

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[144] W.T. Sampson, 'The Naval Defense of the Coast', *USNIP*, Volume XV (1889), p. 185.
[145] Ibid., p. 186.

duties must be largely neglected, and some of the most efficient means of bringing the enemy to terms be disregarded'.[146]

In a similar vein, the Policy Board highlighted the deterrent qualities of a overwhelming naval force equipped and organised along an offensive orientation, the primary aim of which was threefold: (1) the protection of commerce; (2) the protection of American cities and naval ports from bombardment and blockade; and (3) the preservation of American rights and interests abroad. To ensure these conditions required the complete destruction of enemy naval squadrons at the outbreak of hostilities, to be accomplished by a formidable complement of battleships and cruisers guided by the strategic doctrines of decisive battle, blockade and coastal bombardment. 'We should be prepared with a naval force adequate to such work', the Board concluded, 'and only the most powerful armor-clads would suffice. Whatever force our enemy could fairly be expected to assign to such duty, we should be able to destroy, beyond a doubt'.[147] Accordingly, the Board recommended an expansive multi-year shipbuilding programme to provide 35 battleships, divided between capital ships of limited and extended ranges, and the addition of 24 armoured and protected cruisers of greater than 4,000 tons displacement. The Board, moreover, attached particular importance to the longer-range battleships with extended coal endurance, especially as 'a policy of protection without the power to act offensively, even to carrying a war to the very doors of an enemy, would, at the present time, double the force with which we would have to contend'.[148] In sum, the shipbuilding programme was estimated to cost an astounding $281,500,000, inclusive of torpedo-boats and other coastal defence vessels.

It was an amount that Congress would never have approved but, at the same time, the grossly excessive sum should not overshadow the fact that it resulted from a deliberative process whereby strategic policy was used for the first time to determine force requirements in American naval affairs. The final report, after all, was originally intended as a confidential planning document from which to base future strategic and force structure choices.[149] With this in mind, Tracy opted for a more politically acceptable shipbuilding programme in his annual report of November 1889. Both the programme and the strategic rationale that accompanied it were essentially that advocated by Mahan and Luce throughout the first year of his administration, including his proposal to build 20 battleships - the same number of capital ships suggested by Luce in his article published in the *North American Review* and reprinted in the *Proceedings*.[150] Tracy even used the same arguments to support the creation of offensive battlefleets with enough fighting power to defeat enemy naval squadrons in decisive engagements. 'Naval wars in the future will

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[146] Ibid.
[147] *Report of the Policy Board*, 20 January 1890. Reprinted in *USNIP*, Volume XVI (1890), p. 207.
[148] Ibid., p. 212.
[149] This point was also made in Herrick, p. 63 and Cooling, 'Tracy', p. 80.

be short and sharp. It is morally certain that they will be fought out to the end with the force available at the beginning. The nation that is ready to strike the first blow will gain an advantage which its antagonist can never offset, and inflict injury from which he can never recover'.[151] Thus, from this point forward, Tracy and his successors ensured that American naval modernisation proceeded according to the strategic framework advocated by Luce and Mahan, the roots of which can be traced in the 1880s to the emergence of an organisational culture that stressed the intellectual component to strategic naval development.

EPILOGUE: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC IDEAS

That the final report of the Policy Board was meant as a confidential planning document quickly became evident in January 1890, when Tracy was essentially compelled to disavow it when selected portions of the report were leaked to the press. The historical record is unclear as to who actually leaked the report, but the ramifications of the disclosure soon became apparent to observers both within and outside of the Navy Department. 'No report of the Policy Board was to be published', a departmental insider explained to Luce.[152] 'The general feeling here is that it was unwise to make any portion of its public, and it has unquestionably hurt the service as far as this year's appropriations are concerned. Senator Hale has been pretty positive on this point'.[153] On the basis of Tracy's recommendations outlined in his annual report, Hale had already introduced legislation the month before for the immediate construction of eight medium-range battleships, three cruisers, five torpedo boats and two coastal defence monitors. Now the disclosure of the report threatened the proposed increase in naval construction. With support for the measure dwindling in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, Tracy sought to contain the damage caused by the leak, the prospects for which hinged upon the success of his repeated overtures to congressional authorities. 'I very much regret', Tracy wrote to a friend on 21 January, 'that for the coming four weeks my time is to be continuously occupied before the Senate and House Committees that it will be utterly impossible for me to be away from Washington'.[154]

Tracy's lobbying campaign to secure congressional support for his shipbuilding programme was interrupted by tragedy on 3 February, when his wife and daughter perished in a fire that consumed their residence. The interruption was brief, for Tracy quickly returned to work and appeared before the House Naval Affairs Committee in late March 1890. With the Republicans now in control of both chambers of Congress, chairmanship of the committee reverted to

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[150] Luce, 'Our Future Navy', p. 552.
[151] Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1889, p. 41-42.
[152] C.M. Chester to Luce, 18 February 1890. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7. At the time, Chester was assigned to the Navy Department as a member of the Board of Organisation.
[153] Ibid.

Boutelle, whose frequent correspondence with Luce between 1889 and 1890 ensured that the congressman was quite aware of Luce's views on naval strategy and the proposed shipbuilding programme. At one point, in fact, Boutelle asked Luce to send him a new copy of the article referred to above, presumably so that the congressman could refer to it when the naval affairs committee resumed its deliberations on the annual naval appropriations.[155] As a former naval officer, the congressman was impressed by the persuasive arguments offered by Luce, but as an experienced politician Boutelle also knew that the proposal to build offensive battlefleets was politically untenable, especially now the report of the Policy Board was made public. The exigencies of the situation eventually compelled Boutelle to broker an innovative compromise. In what appeared to be a setback for Tracy, Luce and Mahan, the congressman recommended that the number of battleships proposed to be built be reduced from eight to three. Boutelle also described these vessels as 'coastline seagoing battleships', which he later explained was necessary to emphasise their defensive qualities while preserving the offensive capabilities embodied in their design. 'By building such ships', he wrote to Luce on 6 March, 'we should avoid the popular apprehension of jingoism in naval matters, while we can develop the full offensive and defensive powers of construction as completely as in foreign cruising battleships in all but speed and fuel capacity'.[156]

The revised shipbuilding programme attracted enough support for passage in both the House and the Senate. The final version of the bill, which became law on 30 June 1890, authorised the construction of the three coastline battleships, in addition to one protected cruiser, one torpedo cruiser, and one torpedo boat. Thus, when compared to Britain and the Naval Defence Act of 1889, the American version did not include an overwhelming legislative affirmation for a forward offensive naval strategy, nor were the battleships of the *Indiana*-class functionally equivalent to the pre-dreadnought standard established by the British *Royal Sovereigns*. The first American battleships suffered from serious design flaws that ranged from inadequate armour distribution, excessive armament and blast interference, to a low-freeboard that was aggravated at maximum bunker capacity.[157] In time the disparity in design and performance would be narrowed, as American designers studied foreign naval construction and improved existing designs before proceeding with the construction of four classes of battleships before 1900. Furthermore, the concept of the 'coastline' battleship was eventually dropped in 1896, when a board headed by Admiral Walker was convened on 26 March to consider the direction of future battleship design. The report of the Walker board, dated 10 June 1896, was a barometer of American naval aspirations to become a modern seapower in the image of the Royal Navy: 'Our battleships, even

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[154] Tracy to William C. Sanger, 21 January 1890. Tracy Papers. LC/MD/Container #24.
[155] Boutelle to Luce, 30 December 1889. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
[156] Boutelle to Luce, 6 March 1890. Luce Papers. NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
[157] Norman Friedman, *U.S. Battleships: An Illustrative Design History*, (Annapolis 1985), p. 27.

if strictly "coastline" in their sphere of operations, have greater need to be strictly "seagoing" than vessels of their class operating in the Mediterranean, or in the narrow seas in northern Europe'.[158]

The qualifications for a modern seapower, however, also included a strategic rationale to underwrite the shipbuilding programmes authorised in Britain and in the United States. In both countries, the strategic and force structure choices rendered were similar in origin, in that the decisional inputs and outputs to naval policy formulation were framed by the strategic ideas of naval officers and the actions taken in support of them. In this and the previous chapter, an organisational culture in transition was revealed to have shaped American progress toward strategic naval development, culminating in the adoption of a forward offensive naval strategy in November 1889. The transition was not without resistance and controversy, however, as evidenced by the intense struggle between the advocates of technology and strategy in the Navy Department. The conflict itself was precipitated by the opponents of the War College, the priorities of which were deemed inimical to the rigid technological objectives established by the department secretary. When a personal vendetta encouraged Secretary Whitney to move definitively against the War College and the naval officers associated with it, the challenge to preserve the institution was left to its most vocal advocates. Luce, Mahan and Walker worked together not only to save the War College, but also the research agenda and curriculum that offered the prospect for strategic innovation. Although the War College was eventually consolidated with the Torpedo Station, the setback was only temporary, as renewed appreciation for the institution and its research agenda heralded a new brand of strategic thinking in the Navy Department. Luce, Mahan and Walker were again instrumental in this regard, but ultimately the adoption of an offensive orientation in American naval affairs can best be explained by the ideas inspired, institutionalised and finally implemented by naval officers in shaping the evolving nature of American naval policy between 1882 and 1889.

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[158] Ibid., p. 37.

CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 8

Reflections on the Decisions of 1889

INTRODUCTION

There are three mains themes that appear throughout this thesis, all of which revolve around organisational culture, naval policy formulation, and the decisions of 1889. The purpose of this final chapter is to consider what has been learned from both cases, not just about the decisions in and of themselves but also the implications for naval policy formulation in London and Washington. Accordingly, the chapter is divided into four main sections. The first two sections consider the impact of these decisions upon British and American naval policies in 1889, the outcomes of which can be distinguished in both cases by variations in the *content* and *process* of naval policy formulation. The third section reviews how, in both cases, strategic ideas were inspired, institutionalised and finally implemented despite bureaucratic and political opposition to them. The chapter concludes with some final observations about the cultural approach and its potential to improve the writing of naval history.

THE DECISIONS IN LONDON: A SNAPSHOT OF BRITISH NAVAL POLICY IN 1889

This thesis has challenged a misinterpretation of the Naval Defence Act that has been left uncorrected since the publication of Arthur Marder's *The Anatomy of British Seapower* in 1940.[1] That this image is alive and well in current historical scholarship is evident in the recent biographies of Lord Salisbury which have appeared within the past year.[2] Not unexpectedly, both authors credit Marder's research for informing their shared conclusion that Salisbury was the thrust behind the Naval Defence Act, that it was because of his personal intervention that the Cabinet and the Admiralty were compelled to respond to a naval arms race that loomed between Britain, France and Russia.[3] In the process, the biographies perpetuate an image of British naval policy as reflective of a critical lapse of perspective in the manner in which the Admiralty conducted its business in the late 1880s, when threats from France and Russia were serious enough to warrant concern from Salisbury but not from professional naval opinion, thereby necessitating the remedial actions taken by the statesman to shore up British naval supremacy. The research presented in this study, however, strongly suggests that this interpretation of British naval policy and the Naval Defence Act is misinformed, in so far as it exaggerates the threats posed by hypothetical adversaries, mischaracterises how naval policy was formulated within the context of civil-military relations, and wrongly credits politicians for uncovering a strategic problem that had already been solved analytically by naval war planners in 1887 and 1888. From these observations emerge a different source for the motivations behind the Naval Defence Act, premised on the recognition that organisational cultures, defined broadly in terms of the strategic

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[1] Arthur J. Marder, *The Anatomy of British Seapower: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era, 1880-1905*, (New York 1940).
[2] Andrew Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan*, (London 1999) and David Steele, *Lord Salisbury: A Political Biography*, (London 1999).

ideas shared among naval officers, can and do shape the strategic and force structure choices of naval organisations.

From the outset, it is important to consider what has been learned about the Naval Defence Act, and British naval policy in general, before venturing into the specifics. More than anything else, the Naval Defence Act represented a fundamental reassessment of the bases of British naval policy, which during the 1870s and 1880s remained in flux for reasons that varied between technological uncertainties, domestic political agendas, and most especially the bitter struggle for primacy between the professionals and politicians in the policymaking process. Whether it was under the premiership of Gladstone or Salisbury, naval policy received scant attention in the late Victorian era, except when reluctantly emphasised to assuage public opinion in the aftermath of an invasion scare, the latest occurring in 1884 when France posed an illusory cross-channel threat to the home isles. It was this vacillating pattern of ministerial apathy and vigilance that characterised the peaks and troughs of British naval policy, and in late 1886 Salisbury resumed the premiership with more apathy and less vigilance. His appointees to the Admiralty, Lord George Hamilton and Sir Arthur Bower Forwood, moved quickly to restrain naval expenditures through reforms conceived to promote 'economy' through 'efficiency' in British naval administration. In the process, the politicians alienated their naval advisors on the Admiralty Board, eventually prompting the resignation of two Naval Lords in 1888. The first to relinquish his post was Captain Lord Charles Beresford, the Fourth Naval Lord who resigned in protest over plans to downsize the Naval Intelligence Department, whose small contingent of naval officers he viewed as indispensable since it prepared naval campaigns, mobilisation plans and other analytical assessments aside from its traditional intelligence gathering activities. Three months later, in April 1888, Vice-Admiral William Graham resigned his post as Third Naval Lord and Controller of the Admiralty after a confrontation with Forwood over the Parliamentary Secretary's repeated criticism of the naval professionals on the Admiralty Board.

Thus, throughout the period from 1886 to 1889, the overall direction of British naval policy was guided more by the 'compass of finance' mandated by Hamilton than the professional competence of the naval officers in the Admiralty, particularly the strategic thinkers in the intelligence department whose force planning efforts were categorically dismissed by the First Lord. Yet the Naval Defence Act resulted in a formal expression of a strategic doctrine that would shape British naval policy until the First World War.[4] This sudden reversal in emphasis in the

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[3] See especially Steele, pp. 243-244 and 252-253; and Roberts, p. 540.

[4] That British strategic doctrine remained consistent from 1889 to 1914 is evidenced in Paul M. Hayes, 'Britain, Germany and the Admiralty's Plans for Attacking Enemy Territory', in Lawrence Freedman, Paul Hayes and Robert O'Neill, (eds), *War, Strategy and Politics: Essays in Honour of Sir Michael Howard*, (London 1992), p. 95-116; David French, *British Economic and Strategic Planning, 1905-1915*, (London 1982), pp. 27-31; Paul Haggie, 'The Royal Navy and War Planning in the Fisher Era', *Journal of*

policymaking process, from finance to strategy, can be traced to the pervasive influence of strategic ideas and the actions taken by naval officers to uphold them. Fundamental to British naval thought in this period were the lessons of naval history, which were retained in the institutional memories of the Royal Navy but were infrequently applied in the nineteenth century until their formalised study in the 1870s at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, at the insistence of John Knox Laughton. With each year of instruction until 1887, when he was succeeded by Rear Admiral P.H. Colomb, Laughton imparted his particular brand of strategic thinking to the junior and senior members of the officer corps, thereby laying the future groundwork for a strong intellectual presence in the policy formulation process in the Admiralty. In this regard, Laughton was assisted by the creation of an *ad hoc* intelligence committee in 1882, later formalised as a department in 1886, charged with assessing foreign naval capabilities and their implications to the traditional wartime functions of the Royal Navy. Under the stewardship of Captain W.H. Hall, the intelligence department quickly established a precedent for combining applied naval history with strategic analysis to benefit the articulation of policy by the Admiralty Board. That future Admiralty Boards understood the value of this combination is amply reflected in the succession of service intellectuals appointed as D.N.I, between 1890 and 1905, among them Bridge, Battenberg, Beaumont, Custance, Slade and Ottley. These appointments, in the aggregate, ensured that British naval policy was inexorably linked with the solving of strategic problems, with naval history as a reference guide on which to base strategic and force structure choices.

When viewed in this way, the Naval Defence Act can thus be seen as an answer to a strategic problem, which was examined by Captain Hall before submitting his analysis to the First Lord in December 1887. Hall used a worst case scenario and an unlikely threat, the prospect of a Franco-Russian naval combination, to prove an important point: the Royal Navy would be hard pressed to fulfil its traditional wartime functions, the blockade of enemy ports and the conduct of offensive coastal operations, with an adequate reserve to shield the home isles from the threat of invasion. The implications of the report, that a supplemental shipbuilding programme was in order, was a bitter pill to swallow for the First Lord, who chose to dismiss its conclusions and, coincidentally, approve the actions taken against the intelligence department. What occurred next transformed the dynamics of civil-military relations in naval policy formulation for the next twenty years, as 'Hamilton and Forwood were forced out of the vital but narrow groove of administrative improvement into the broad atmosphere of national defence policy'.[5] Following the resignation of Beresford from the Admiralty Board in January 1888, a group of prominent naval officers undertook an extraordinary effort to use public opinion as an instrument to pressure

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Contemporary History, 8 (1973), pp. 113-132; and Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, Volume 1, (London 1961), pp. 367-372.

[5] Paul Smith, 'Ruling the Waves: Government, the Service, and the Cost of Naval Supremacy, 1885-99', in idem., (ed), *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain, 1856-1990*, (London 1996), p. 35.

the Salisbury ministry to reform the manner in which naval policy was created and accept the necessity for naval modernisation. In taking such a stand on this issue, and the precedent of the Naval Defence Act that followed, it was virtually guaranteed that naval professionals would provide the substantive rationale behind critical decisions that affected British naval policy in the future.

Finally, the Naval Defence Act also revolutionised how British naval constructors translated the strategic preferences of naval officers into capital ship design. In the age of steam prior to 1889, especially in the 1870s and 1880s, the technology simply did not exist to design and build the battleships and cruisers that satisfied, in all respects, the expectations of the officers who were organised and trained for offensive naval warfare. When technology actually caught up to Admiralty war plans in the late 1880s, with the introduction of water-tube boilers and triple expansion engines, naval officers were invited to critique the proposed designs to ensure that the intended roles and missions of the vessels were amply reflected in capital ship design policy. Such was the case in the design development of what later became the *Royal Sovereigns*, the first pre-dreadnought battleships authorised by the Naval Defence Act which epitomised the connection between battlefleet strength and British naval supremacy. In November 1888, the Director of Naval Construction at the Admiralty, Sir William White, attended a special meeting of the Admiralty Board, which approved the standardised designs he proposed for the *Royal Sovereigns* and, more importantly, the strategic rationale behind their construction. The new type of battleship White envisioned for the Royal Navy would possess superior firepower and an extended radius of action to deter its potential adversaries and, if necessary, to destroy the remnants of the battlefleet that managed to evade the pincers of a British naval blockade. It was a strategy based upon decades of British naval experience and tradition, one which Admiralty war planners were poised to continue.

THE DECISIONS IN WASHINGTON: A SNAPSHOT OF AMERICAN NAVAL POLICY IN 1889

While it is impossible to discuss the Naval Defence Act without fully considering the merits of the Marder approach, it is equally difficult to avoid the Mahan hagiographies when reassessing the personalities, institutions and events that led to an unprecedented shift in American naval policy in 1889. It is, after all, widely held in the historical community that Mahan and his literary efforts provided American policymakers with a conceptual blueprint to construct a modern battlefleet in the image of the Royal Navy. This is not entirely inaccurate and, for this reason, the conclusions of this study are not unfriendly to Mahan, nor to the advocates of the Mahan approach in naval historiography, in the sense that his contributions to the process of strategic adjustment should not be considered separately from the activities of the naval officers he collaborated with to push this incremental process forward in the 1880s. When viewed in this

way, the worst that can be spoken of Mahan is that he was not an atypical pioneer in the manner envisaged in his hagiographies, that instead of originating the strategic ideas he popularised in his writings, he developed them jointly with assistance from a supporting cast of naval reformers who were also inspired by the notions of service professionalism, strategic innovation and the lessons of naval history. Not surprisingly, the interactions between these officers, particularly the strategic discourse between Mahan, Luce, Goodrich and Sampson, remains on the periphery of contemporary historical scholarship. That Mahan benefited from their naval professional arguments, for example, is not even acknowledged in the latest historiographical portrait of Mahan by Professor Sumida.[6] Luce is mentioned sparingly, while Goodrich and Sampson failed to warrant a single reference. This oversight can only be seen as an act of irony, for together these officers heralded a new mode of strategic thinking in the Navy Department and in the process of strategic adjustment effected a cultural and ideational shift in the content of American naval policy, both in terms of the strategic preferences advocated and the battlefleet constructed to fulfil them.

On the surface, it would also appear that strategic adjustment, as reflected in the decisions of 1889, was ultimately intended to bring the Americans closer to the British model of a modern seapower, especially when it came to the use of overwhelming naval force as instruments of deterrence and power projection. This, again, is not entirely untrue, as Mahan and his colleagues at the Naval War College perceived British naval history as a learning ground from which to tease out fundamental laws of naval warfare and apply them to modern strategic and tactical problems. '[T]he practical object of this inquiry', explained Mahan, 'is to draw from the lessons of history inferences applicable to one's own country and service'.[7] Likewise, American naval constructors were equally fascinated with British ship designs in the 1880s, having obtained first-hand experience with them when the designs for the armoured cruiser U.S.S. *Texas* were purchased from the Barrow Shipbuilding Company in 1887.[8] Also preserved in the Bureau of Construction was a volume of newspaper clippings, ostensibly supplied by the American naval attaché in London, filled with technical descriptions of the latest achievements in British naval shipbuilding, including the launching of the H.M.S. *Royal Sovereign* in February 1891.[9] Yet, while American naval officers were abundantly enthusiastic in their borrowing of strategic ideas and technology from the Royal Navy, the fact remains that American naval policy was not a mirror image of its British counterpart in 1889. Rather, the naval policies of both countries would forever be

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[6] Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command: The Classic Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan Reconsidered*, (Baltimore 1997).
[7] Alfred T. Mahan, *The Influence of Seapower Upon History, 1660-1783*, (Boston 1890), p. 83.
[8] Norman Friedman, *U.S. Battleships: An Illustrated Design History*, (Annapolis 1985), p. 21.
[9] Bureau of Construction & Repair, 'Newpaper Clippings from the London *Times*, 1886-1893'. RG 19/432.

distinguished by variations in naval strategy, the policy formulation process, and legislative interference in naval procurement.

At the conceptual level, American naval policy was broadly defined in 1889 as the solution to a hemispheric defence problem. As the leading spokesman for this new strategic outlook, Mahan equated hemispheric defence with the struggle for command of the sea, the attainment of which linked operational performance and the outcome of decisive naval battles to the successful application of seapower in defence of the American coastline. Hence, for planning purposes, command of the sea quickly emerged as the overriding strategic concept from which to build an American battlefleet that was superior to the medium-sized fleets of its likely adversaries in Europe and South America (ie., Spain and Chile). Yet, in developing the strategic concept for American audiences, Mahan was curiously silent on the offensive potential that followed from command of the sea, examples for which appeared throughout British experiences with global warfare between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Ironically, in his 1891 book *Naval Warfare*, Admiral Colomb also used an historical methodology for a similar research agenda, from which he demonstrated that exploiting command of the sea, in the form of offensive coastal operations, was a vital aspect of British naval supremacy.[10] As observed by Professor Andrew Lambert: 'There are striking parallels between the ambition of Colomb's work and the almost exactly contemporaneous work of Mahan'.[11] This is one of them. It is possible, even plausible, that Mahan avoided a similar emphasis in recognition of the opposition it would most certainly engender in Congress, where civilian preferences for a defensive naval force, composed of coastal and harbour defence monitors, remained particularly strong in 1889 and into the 1890s. Already Mahan and his mentor Luce had acquired first-hand experience with political inclinations to legislate naval policy from their interactions with the congressional naval committees over the fate of the Naval War College. Both men were acutely aware that the strategic ideas advocated by naval officers influenced the content but not the process in which naval policy was formulated in Washington. As reflected in the political controversy that followed the Navy Department's proposal for strategic adjustment in November 1889, the final decisions of naval policy were in the hands of civilians and not the professionals.

If naval officers were virtually powerless in reforming the legislative atmosphere in which naval policy was created, the prospect of a favourable outcome in congressional deliberations over strategic adjustment was heightened considerably by the personal relationships forged with members of the naval committees. At the time, the naval committees were considered to be the most 'powerful factors in determining the naval policy of the country. Their decision upon the

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[10] Philip H. Colomb, *Naval Warfare*, (London 1891).
[11] Andrew Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History: John Knox Laughton, the Royal Navy and the Historical Profession*, (London 1998), p. 106.

numbers and types of vessels in the shipbuilding program each year is usually final. Their reviews upon any measure which the department wishes to have enacted into law must be reckoned with, for their opposition will prevent its passage'.[12] Working within the process was therefore more productive than opposing it, and in this regard Luce and Mahan were largely effective in gently prodding their political counterparts toward naval modernisation; their main opposition during the formative years of the Naval War College, ironically, came not from Congress but from within the Navy Department itself. Of these relationships, perhaps the most important in 1889-90 existed between Luce and Stephen Boutelle, the new Chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee. With Luce as his unofficial naval advisor, it was Boutelle who conceived of the modest shipbuilding programme that eventually received congressional approval in June 1890. The three 'coastline' battleships of the *Indiana* class that followed were designed deliberately with a smaller coal capacity than the *Royal Sovereigns*, in recognition of the intense and bitter political disputes over the course of American naval expansion.[13] Yet the political interference that surrounded their construction did not extend to the strategic rationale that inspired them in the first place. Thus, while the policy formulation process remained politicised, rigid and often independent from naval professional opinion, as it was intended to be in the traditional struggle between the legislative and executive branches of government, the Navy Law of 1890 was a restrained endorsement of the ideas and actions taken by naval officers in support of the decisions of 1889 and the process of strategic adjustment unfolding in the United States.

THE CASES IN COMPARISON: NAVAL OFFICERS AND STRATEGIC IDEAS IN NAVAL POLICY FORMULATION

So far the decisions of 1889 have been assessed in terms of their overall impact on the naval policies that resulted in Britain and the United States, with a particular emphasis upon the policymaking process and the efforts by naval officers to shape strategic and force structure choices with their professional arguments. How successful these efforts were in both cases become immediately apparent when distinguishing between the *content* and *process* of naval policy formulation. As described above, the Naval Defence Act did not represent a fundamental shift in the content of British naval policy, yet the circumstances surrounding its passage succeeded in transforming the process in which naval policy was formulated and articulated by the Admiralty. A much different result was achieved in the American case, as naval officers were successful in shaping the content but not the process of naval policy formulation. In spite of this,

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[12] Charles Oscar Paullin, *Paullin's History of Naval Administration, 1775-1911: A Collection of Articles from the U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, (Annapolis 1968), p. 375-376.

[13] For more on the political dimension to strategic adjustment, see Peter Trubowitz, 'Geography and Strategy: The Politics of American Naval Expansion', in Peter Trubowitz, Emily O. Goldman and Edward Rhodes, (eds), *The Politics of Strategic Adjustment: Ideas, Institutions and Interests*, (New York 1999), pp. 105-138.

the decisional inputs and outputs that characterised naval policy formulation in both cases were of similar origin, in that the actions taken by naval officers to link policy decisions with strategic ideas can be attributed ultimately to the pervasiveness of these ideas and how they were packaged in the naval professional arguments they inspired. This, in essence, typifies how organisational cultures in navies can shape the decisionmaking process so that the outcomes match, as close as possible, the preferences of the senior officer corps and how it conceptualises the wartime functions of the service. To leave the decisions of 1889 at the doorstep of strategic ideas and organisational cultures, however, would be insufficient for purposes of this study, as it would fail to show how strategic ideas were inspired by naval history, became institutionalised in analytical frameworks, and were finally implemented with the assistance of service patrons when bureaucratic opposition threatened their usefulness.

The Inspiration of Strategic Ideas: John Knox Laughton and Naval History

Undoubtedly the most prominent linkage between the two cases is the extent to which naval history, or more precisely the teachings of John Knox Laughton, were used to inspire strategic preferences within the senior officer corps. While Laughton was never an active participant in the events that prompted the decisions of 1889, his imprint upon the strategic discourse that preceded the policy deliberations in both countries is unmistakable. That his unique and innovative perspective of naval history as the servant of strategic naval thought would in time be commonplace among British naval officers was virtually assured during his tenure as a lecturer at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, between 1873 and 1885. For it was at RNC Greenwich that Laughton transformed his corpus of knowledge into a workable thesis which he later encapsulated in perhaps his most important lecture at RUSI, 'The Scientific Study of Naval History' in June 1874.[14] Though Laughton was convinced that naval history would not be studied by British naval officers unless it was recognised as a 'scientific' pursuit with practical applications, he nonetheless believed that embedded in the subject were instructive observations that were equally relevant to the naval profession. In the process, as observed by Professor Lambert, Laughton 'pioneered the modernisation of naval thought, developing naval history as the basis for a thorough study of tactics, strategy, leadership and service doctrine'.[15] At his insistence and with the approval of the Admiralty, the course curriculum at the college was expanded in 1876 to include a series of lectures on naval history, an undertaking which Laughton used to remind the naval officers in attendance of the potency of naval history in resolving the strategic and tactical problems associated with modern naval warfare.

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[14] John Knox Laughton, 'The Scientific Study of Naval History', *RUSI Journal* (1874).
[15] Lambert, p. 11.

Equally important to Laughton and his work was an impressive list of personal contacts he managed to collect over the course of his career. Many of these contacts were with senior naval officers who would later assume critical roles in the shaping of British naval policy in the pre-dreadnought era. In the 1880s, for example, the list included prominent members of the Board of Admiralty, including two Senior Naval Lords, as well as countless naval practitioners and service intellectuals. In the former category was none other than Admiral Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, perhaps the most respected naval officer in uniform, who quickly became a close personal friend of Laughton during his brief tenure as President of RNC Greenwich in 1881-82. While at Greenwich, Hornby attended many of Laughton's lectures on naval history and agreed with most if not all of the observations offered by the historian on issues of naval strategy, tactics and command.[16] Fully versed in the range of strategic problems that confronted Admiralty war planners in the 1880s, Hornby would eventually lend his name and support to the public campaign for heightened strategic awareness – the subject of Chapter 5. It was an action that Laughton no doubt approved of, for there was no officer alive who was more capable than Hornby of convincing the Admiralty Board to embrace the strategic thinking endorsed by the newly formed Naval Intelligence Department.

Laughton also benefited from his personal contacts with naval officers assigned to the Admiralty. As will be recalled from Chapter 3, his most accessible source of information resided within the intelligence department and, in particular, the D.N.I. and his two assistants. Laughton had first become acquainted with the current D.N.I., Captain Hall, when both were assigned to the Gunnery Training Ship H.M.S. *Excellent* for three years in the late 1860s. While the extent of the relationship between Laughton and Hall remains unknown – it appears that Hall had little time for anything else than his work - there is little doubt that Laughton was kept readily informed of the intellectual activities of the D.N.I. through his two assistants, Captains R.N. Custance and S.M. Eardley-Wilmot. Both officers frequently encountered Laughton at the lecture hall and various meeting rooms at RUSI where, in 1887 and 1888, all three men served on the executive council of the institution. More than likely Hall dispatched Custance and Eardley-Wilmot to listen, observe and consult with the resident strategic thinkers that attended the lectures sponsored at the institution, among them Laughton and the brothers Colomb. In this way, RUSI functioned as a semi-official think tank on naval matters, with Laughton as its leading authority on naval history to advise on strategic issues confronting the intelligence department. Finally, in January 1889, Hall was succeeded as D.N.I. by Captain Cyprian A.G. Bridge, Laughton's lifelong friend and fellow service intellectual who in 1893 co-founded the Navy Records Society with the pioneer naval historian, thereby strengthening the bridge between the lessons of naval history and the

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[16] Ibid, p. 76.

strategic thinking encouraged in the intelligence department.[17] Upon his arrival there, Bridge would have found that his predecessor had already invoked the lessons of British naval history when articulating deeply rooted strategic preferences in a hypothetical war with France in 1884, with Russia in 1885, and yet again with a Franco-Russian naval combination in mind in 1888.

Similarly, in the United States during the late 1880s, the lessons of British naval history were also being used to justify an unprecedented shift in American naval policy, complete with a forward offensive naval strategy and a complement of battleships and armoured cruisers to prosecute it. As noted above, Mahan is generally recognised for popularising the strategic rationale behind the creation of American seapower, yet the ideas that were eternalised in *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* were far from original. As was the case in Britain, the credit for applying naval history in this fashion ultimately belongs to Laughton, who along with Luce provided Mahan with the historical fodder from which to formulate his famous treatise. In this regard, the relationship between Laughton and Luce has continued to remain on the margin of Anglo-American naval history, although a recent and illustrative biography of Laughton has largely redressed the void in the scholarly literature. 'The most important aspect of this relationship', observes Lambert, 'was the exchange of ideas. Luce exploited Laughton's original intellectual contribution in his efforts to revitalise the United States Navy'.[18] As will be recalled from Chapter 6, Luce ensured that naval history was the centrepiece of an innovative research agenda at the U.S. Naval War College, envisioned by its founder to be an institution for higher learning and the advanced study of modern naval warfare. From this agenda emerged the conceptual elements of a new strategic framework for the U.S. Navy, for which Mahan was recruited to refine and validate through historical analysis between 1886 and 1889. That he managed to accomplish this task in the manner envisioned by Laughton is a testament to both the literary talents of the author and, more importantly, the strategic ideas used by him to arouse American interest in the lessons of naval history. On this latter point Laughton concurred without reservation, observing in October 1890 that Mahan's book was 'at least not so much as a contribution to history as an exposition of the principles of naval strategy and tactics, and of the aims and methods of the science of naval war'.[19]

The Institutionalisation of Strategic Ideas

A second feature common to both cases is the manner in which strategic ideas became firmly established in the analytical frameworks of innovative research institutions. For the Americans in the 1870s, the process first took shape in the form of a voluntary association of naval officers, the U.S. Naval Institute (USNI), whose professional membership and intellectual contributions were

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[17] Lambert, p. 11.
[18] Ibid., p. 30.

modelled loosely around RUSI in London. Like its British counterpart, the research agenda of the USNI is evident from the topics addressed in the lectures that were subsequently published in *The Proceedings* for circulation to a wider audience within the naval establishment. Many of these lectures were about the same issues that also confronted British naval officers throughout the 1870s and 1880s, with a particular focus upon the evolving relationship between naval strategy, tactics and the technological aspects of modern naval warfare. As one might expect, moreover, there was also a noticeable similarity in the type of naval officer who most closely identified with the underlying priorities of both institutions: the betterment of the armed services and in particular the naval profession. In this regard, the service intellectuals and their patrons were the most active among their contemporaries, using the lecture format as a means to disseminate their views on naval warfare, both in terms of the warships needed to be built and the strategic ideas to govern their use. Thus, while RUSI and its membership benefited from having the foremost strategic thinkers among its ranks, the membership of the USNI possessed an equally impressive stable of talent, among them Luce, Mahan, Goodrich, Sampson, Soley and Mason. All would exert a major influence in the shaping of American naval policy in the 1880s, when the strategic ideas they advocated as members of the USNI were advanced in the Navy Department by the formation of the Office of Naval Intelligence in 1882 and the Naval War College in 1884.

As was seen in Chapters 6 and 7, the establishment of these two research institutions were defining moments in American naval affairs, for reasons due mainly to their contributions to the process of strategic adjustment despite bureaucratic attempts from within the Navy Department to derail it between 1885 and 1889. While O.N.I. and the War College were originally conceived with different purposes in mind, the origins of both institutions can be traced to the USNI, and more specifically, the intellectual aspirations of Mason and Luce, respectively. Both officers had championed their creation as members of the USNI, and upon their formation the institutions, not ironically, were largely staffed by their colleagues from the voluntary organisation. Upon being appointed to head O.N.I. as the first Chief Intelligence Officer, Mason even received permission to formalise a relationship between the USNI and the new department, an arrangement similar to what existed between RUSI and the Naval Intelligence Department in the Admiralty. When the Naval War College was founded two years later, the institutions immediately became mutually supportive of one another, fostered at first out of financial necessity as the Bureau of Navigation failed to secure congressional funding to support the new postgraduate course. To assemble a faculty for the college the Bureau turned to the intellectual sanctuary it created in O.N.I., and thereafter the exchange of personnel and other resources between Washington and Newport were common. Finally, and most importantly, O.N.I. and the War College institutionalised a recognition of the import of naval history to policy analysis, an ideational linkage that no doubt

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[19] [John Knox Laughton], 'Captain Mahan on Maritime Power', *Edinburgh Review*, (October 1890), p. 420.

was strengthened further by the Office of Naval Records and Library, which was created along with O.N.I. in 1882 and attached to it under the supervision of Professor J.R. Soley. His presence in both institutions, as an archivist, lecturer and naval historian, brought widespread attention to the benefits of historical awareness and the strategic ideas that derived from it. It was Soley, in the end, who assisted Mahan in locating a publisher for the historical research he conducted under the auspices of the War College.

No such relationship existed between RNC Greenwich and the intelligence function in the Admiralty, although the naval officers who staffed the department in the 1880s soon established themselves collectively as the strategic conscience of the Royal Navy. For decades since the age of Nelson, British naval officers were rarely challenged to think strategically in peacetime and did so only when prompted by the occasional invasion scare that arose from disturbing reports of naval developments in Europe. With the formation of an *ad hoc* intelligence committee in December 1882, strategic thinking thus became a full time enterprise in the Admiralty, and the analytical products generated in turn were reflective of the widening disparities in naval capabilities amongst the naval powers of Europe, the extent of British naval supremacy *vis-à-vis* France and Russia, and the scope of operations needed to be taken against them in the event of war. For the latter the committee turned to the lessons of British naval history, from which the strategic preferences of the senior officer corps and its organisational culture were derived. When war was anticipated with France in 1884, Captain Hall invoked naval history to assess the strategic options available to the Royal Navy for such a contingency, concluding that a forward offensive naval strategy was more preferable for its decisive impact upon the conduct of the war than a defensive posture that departed from the British way of warfare. Predictably, Hall again sided with the strategic traditions of the service in the next year, when he was asked to formulate the broad outlines of a naval campaign for a war with Russia in the aftermath of the Penjdeh incident in Afghanistan. When, in 1886, the committee was transformed into an official department within the Admiralty, Hall sought to ensure that the strategic thinking he advocated so strenuously informed the most essential aspects of British naval administration and, in particular, the budget-driven process to determine the force requirements of the Royal Navy. His efforts in this regard, especially the innovative force planning model he devised in late 1887, quickly incited opposition to the new department from within the Admiralty, to such an extent that the Admiralty Board was moved to reduce the budget of the department at the expense of the myriad of activities it supported to institutionalise strategic thinking in peacetime policy deliberations.

In time, Hall was recognised by his colleagues for 'having done six years of most valuable work under circumstances of great difficulty and discouragement'.[20] Yet he left the Admiralty in January 1889 at the peak of his success, when the strategic preferences he articulated as D.N.I. were emerging as the underlying principles behind the Naval Defence Act and a new era of naval shipbuilding in Britain. While Hall was virtually powerless to overcome the institutional jealousies he encountered in 1887 and 1888, his plight had attracted the patronage of senior naval officers who supported the activities of the Naval Intelligence Department. What ensued was a six-month campaign to plead the case for heightened strategic awareness in the formulation of British naval policy.

The Importance of Patronage in Implementing Strategic Ideas

Aside from commonalities in strategic ideas and their institutionalisation, the British and American cases presented here are further linked by the role of patronage and its intervention in the policy formulation process within the context of civil-military relations. Both cases also highlighted the necessity of patronage in establishing critical pathways from which to navigate innovative ideas and their supporters around the obstacles of organisational resistance. As evidenced in Chapter 5, patronage transformed a minor controversy over the actions taken against the intelligence department into a national debate over British naval administration. Convinced that an internal pathway for policy innovation did not exist within the Admiralty, Captain Lord Charles Beresford resigned his seat on the Admiralty Board in January 1888 to protest not only the recent misfortunes that beset the new department but also the larger consequences of ministerial apathy in naval affairs, as indicated by the fact that finance and not strategy served as the final arbiter of British naval policy. A naval officer with a seat in Parliament, Beresford challenged the Salisbury ministry to respond to the allegations he levied against the Admiralty, eventually succeeding in pressuring the First Lord – Lord George Hamilton – to respond in defence of his naval administration. In the process, Beresford stirred considerable parliamentary interest in naval affairs, punctuated by frequent debates in the House and the appointment of a select committee to consider the annual budget proposed by the Government for the Royal Navy. In the next few months, the committee would elicit the testimony of every member of the Admiralty Board and produce four reports of its investigation, the last submitted in August 1888. Although the committee rendered few substantive conclusions, it was the sort of political interference that the Salisbury ministry could not have wanted as it struggled to parry the attacks of Beresford and other Tories in the House.

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[20] Cited in William James, *The Eyes of the Navy: A Biographical Study of Admiral Sir Reginald Hall*, (London 1955) pp. 3-4.

Yet what appeared at first to be an individual crusade soon resembled an *ad hoc* campaign to arouse public support for heightened strategic awareness in the formulation of British naval policy. For there were other prominent naval practitioners and service intellectuals who were convinced that British naval supremacy was endangered more by ministerial apathy than the naval potential of France and Russia. At the head of list was Admiral Hornby, whose advice and support was frequently sought by Beresford and others throughout the short but effective campaign. The most revered naval officer alive, Hornby became increasingly involved in the campaign as a participant and spokesman at organised events. Less prominent but equally active was Captain C.C.P. Fitzgerald, whose frequent letters to *The Times* in support of the objectives of the campaign matched those contributed by Beresford. Fitzgerald was also instrumental in organising the City National Defence Meeting, which was held in June 1888 and attended by the elite of the senior officer corps. Finally, there were the contributions of Admiral Colomb, a frequent lecturer at RUSI who in 1887 had succeeded Laughton in his duties as lecturer in naval history at RNC Greenwich. Less influential in the public sector than Hornby, Beresford and Fitzgerald, Colomb used naval history to enlighten the audience at RUSI, and later the readers of *The Times*, of the strategic principles that guided British naval policy in the past and which should be allowed to do so in the future. In so doing Colomb focused less upon the maladies of British naval administration than the remedies envisioned to fix it, particularly his argument that naval shipbuilding should reflect strategic requirements, not only in the number of ships to be built but also in the design philosophies used to build them. It was a theme that resonated in *The Times*, and days later the editor, G.E. Buckle, published a lengthy article written by an anonymous contributor in support of Colomb and his prescription for the Admiralty. More than likely the article was written by Laughton, who in a secondary role preferred to allow colleagues better placed than him to lead a public campaign that eventually compelled the Salisbury ministry to reverse course and conduct the cabinet-level strategic review that inspired formulation and passage of the Naval Defence Act.

Similarly, the benefits of patronage and the failure to obtain it is also chronicled in the American chapters, with frequent examples of how senior naval officers created internal pathways to support innovative institutions and the strategic ideas that originated from them. In this regard, the significance of the appointment of Commodore John G. Walker to head the Bureau of Navigation cannot be overlooked, for it was his sponsorship within the Navy Department that heralded the creation of O.N.I. and the Naval War College. Although Walker was not a member of the USNI until his appointment as Bureau chief in 1881, he nevertheless shared an enthusiasm for the prospect of increased naval professionalism to shape the formulation and conduct of American naval policy. Quite intentionally, the Bureau of Navigation soon became a sanctuary for service intellectuals in the Department, as Walker assigned the most talented junior officers to

staff O.N.I. and teach at the War College at the request of Luce or Mahan. Since both institutions were attached to the bureau, Walker also secured departmental approval to reallocate funds to sustain them financially in the absence of congressional support.

Yet there were limits to how far Walker could shield the institutions from their opponents in Congress and in the Department. While O.N.I. emerged unscathed from the criticism levied against the War College in the 1880s, the intelligence department would not receive congressional recognition until 1900. As for the War College and its principal spokesman Luce and Mahan, Walker eventually proved unsuccessful in persuading Secretary W.C. Whitney to silence their opponents with an unequivocal statement of support. Instead, Whitney sided against them, for reasons due more to personal animosities than to an objective assessment, and effectively quashed the campaign Luce and Mahan had enacted in 1888 to secure congressional recognition. Months before Whitney left office in March 1889, he carried out plans to merge the War College with the Naval Torpedo School, the consequences of which were short-lived when his successor resurrected the college and its research agenda at the behest of Luce, Mahan and their supporters in Congress. By the end of his first year in office, Tracy used the strategic ideas advocated at the college and endorsed by an independent policy board to formulate a proposal for strategic adjustment, requesting congressional approval December 1889 for the strategic and force structure choices that would result in an unprecedented shift in American naval policy. The outcome of congressional deliberations was mixed, as the Navy Department approved the strategic ideas contained in the proposal but not the battlefleet requested to implement them. Instead, political compromises were reflected in the Navy Law of 1890 and the provisions for three 'coastline' battleships of the *Indiana* class. This was only a temporary setback, however, as the Navy Department would subsequently commission 26 additional 'seagoing' battleships between 1890 and 1910.[21] Although British naval supremacy remained undisputed during these twenty years, the combination of strategy and structure emboldened the United States to prepare itself for the role of understudy on the world stage before setting its sights to building a navy second to none at the height of the First World War.

THE CULTURAL APPROACH AND NAVAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

While this study has been more about the decisions of 1889 than the cultural approach used to explain them, the opportunity nonetheless exists to assess the cultural approach to explaining military behaviour and how it can be used to broaden future lines of inquiry with respect to naval policy formulation. While historians have been generally accused of using culture as a 'rather vague and indeterminate concept', this study has been precise about what is meant by organisational culture without overstating its importance relative to other factors that might shape

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[21] Friedman, pp. 418-419.

the strategic and force structure choices of military organisations.[22] It has been defined here as a set of attitudes, beliefs, and other common habits of thought that are shared among naval officers and serve as the intellectual basis for their conceptions of the roles and missions of the service. Moreover, it adheres to a basic premise, accepted by proponents as well as critics of the cultural approach, that 'military organizations – indeed all organizations – acquire an ethos and develop an environment in which they work, one that shapes their assumptions and outlook'.[23] Even so the most vocal critics of the approach claim that cultural arguments are interpretative, lack causal determination, and as such are *sui generis*, in the sense that cultural explanations of particular aspects of military behaviour (ie., decisionmaking) cannot be used to develop 'scientific' generalisations that in turn can be applied to other cases. All of these are certainly problematic for political scientists but not to naval historians, who like most of their contemporaries in the modern historical profession have traditionally rejected the positivist or predictive science of history. Likewise, the cultural approach adopted here is not meant to emulate the social sciences but to borrow the concept of organisational culture and combine it with an archival-based research methodology to produce an analytically robust interpretation of the decisions of 1889.

That naval historians should borrow from the social sciences in this fashion is far from novel, as the discipline has been poised for years to embrace new innovative analyses and multidisciplinary approaches to improve the writing of naval history. While this study is the first to directly link the service cultures of navies with the policy sphere of the decisionmaking process, cultural arguments have appeared previously in other studies of naval policy formulation albeit tangentially. In his 1999 book on the Fisher era, Nicholas Lambert hinted at culture when concluding that 'naval policy was not a function of Cabinet policy or strategic principles, but the product of individuals belonging to a bureaucratized institution and operating within a dynamic environment'.[24] Andrew Gordon's latest work on the Battle of Jutland (1996) includes a more explicit cultural argument, although his linkage of service culture with the operational performance of the Grand Fleet is incidental to this comprehensive study of British naval command.[25] Yet despite the different research agendas of both studies, and that professed in this thesis, all three works highlight in varying degrees the conceptual prerequisites for future applications of the cultural approach by naval historians. These prerequisites, not ironically, are largely consistent with current trends in naval historiography.

- First, the cultural approach requires a departure from the policy-and-operations perspective of naval policy formulation, which in the past has oversimplified the policymaking process as

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[22] Douglas Porch, 'Military "Culture" and the Fall of France in 1940', *International Security*, (Spring 2000), p. 162.
[23] Ibid., p. 164.
[24] Nicholas Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, (Columbia 1999), p. 7.

parochial responses to external considerations such as foreign naval rivalries and civilian overreactions to them. While careful not to dismiss them outright, the cultural approach reconciles them with the internal dimension of policy formulation, which includes factors such as organisational cultures, domestic political agendas, financial limitations and other factors shaping naval administration. Of these factors, organisational culture does not possess causal autonomy and is seen instead as an intervening variable between the decisional inputs and outputs that characterise organisational decisionmaking.

- Second, the cultural approach is reflective of the organisational perspective of naval policy formulation, the latest trend in naval historiography which presumes that navies are complex organisations and are characterised by their strategic, political, economic, technical and administrative components. Critical to understanding how these components filter through the decisionmaking process are the ideas and actions of senior naval officers, whose roles in determining policy are subject to the wider context of civil-military relations. As the cultural approach also presumes that naval officers have their own preferences for how to organise and prepare for war, the relationship between professionals and civilians needs to be adequately considered, for the interactions that occur between them are often indicators of the extent to which organisational cultures shape key policy decisions.

- Finally, the cultural approach requires an archival-based research methodology that includes a broader scope of primary source materials. This is an important corollary to the organisational perspective of naval policy formulation, which makes use of underutilised archival sources and supporting documentation to connect personalities, institutions and events that otherwise appear unrelated. As the cultural approach is ultimately directed at explaining organisational outcomes through the ideas and actions of naval officers, these connections represent vital historical linkages to show how professional naval arguments were inspired, institutionalised and finally implemented in the decisionmaking process. Evidence of these historical linkages can be found in departmental records, official and private communications, journal articles, newspaper submissions, personal memoirs, as well as the private papers of senior naval officers.

When viewed in this way, the cultural approach thus represents a new analytic instrument to promote a wider understanding of how naval policy is formulated, especially now that its explanatory power has been established in a comparative study of the decisions of 1889. It is particularly effective in circumstances analogous to the peacetime lull of the late 1880s, when the more traditional determinants of naval policy – external provocations, threat perceptions, and

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[25] Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command*, (London 1996).

civilian intervention – cannot adequately explain what spurred Britain to suddenly enact the Naval Defence Act. Similarly, the cultural approach was shown to be equally effective in determining what prompted the United States into a period of strategic adjustment that culminated in an unprecedented shift in American naval policy. In both cases, conventional wisdom was shown to be misinformed to varying degrees, with the Marder account of the Naval Defence Act more problematic than the Mahan hagiographies in their interpretation of strategic adjustment. There should be no illusion, however, that the cultural approach is inherently revisionist, in the sense that naval histories without cultural arguments are automatically suspect and in need of extensive renovation. Rather, it is offered here as an example of how modern historical techniques can be used to complement and even strengthen the core naval histories of the period.

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